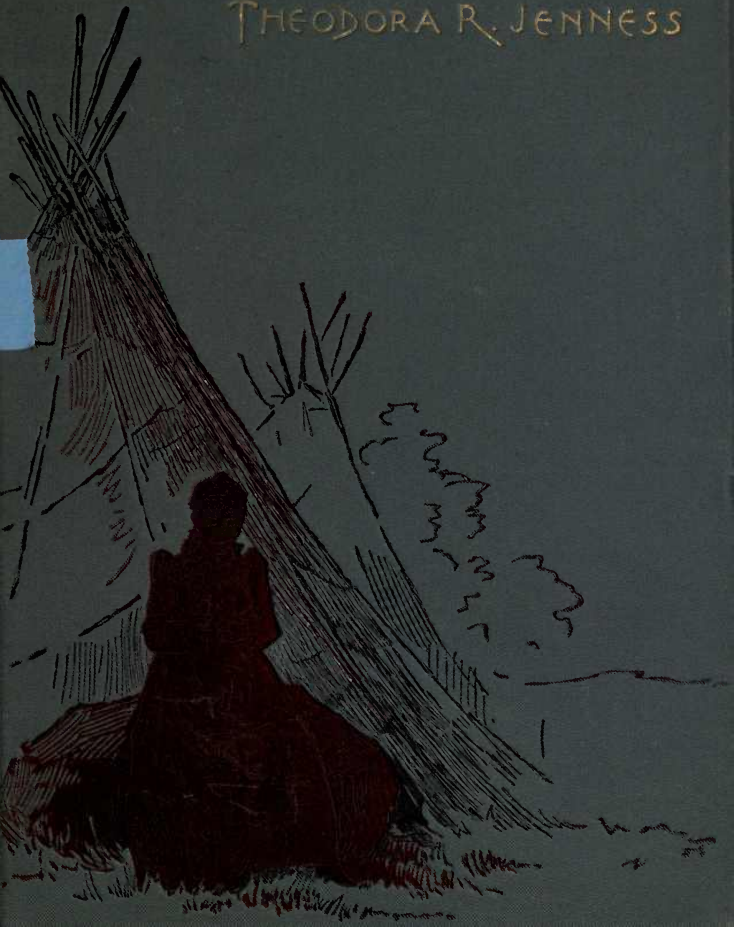
DIOKEE

THEODORA R. JENNESS



TWO YOUNG HOMESTEADERS

BY MRS. THEODORA R. JENNESS

12mo, Cloth, Illustrated, $1.25

"PIOKEE AND HER PEOPLE" is a sequel to the above book

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PIOKEE

AND HER PEOPLE

A RANCH AND TEPEE STORY

BY

THEODORA R. JENNESS

Author of
"TWO YOUNG HOMESTEADERS," and others

Illustrated by Maria L. Kirk

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PIOKEE AND HER PEOPLE.

CHAPTER I.

PRAIRIE TELLS THE STORY.

JOHN and Prairie Bowers were to have a wooden wedding at their ranch.

Prairie was preparing the feast, assisted by her willing helper, Sally Spratt.

Piokee's calm dark eyes were bent upon the work of browning almonds in the skillet. She was stirring the nuts with gentle shakes, keeping them on a ceaseless hop above the fire.

Miriam, a charming morsel of humanity, four years old, was seated in her high-chair by the pastry table, joining in the cheerful bustle with supreme delight. Both tiny fists were filled with dough, and spread before her on the table was a wide array of patty-cakes, as yet unbaked — her contribution to the feast.

"Sally, is the oven right to roast the turkeys to a charm?" asked Prairie, as she laid the first of several dozen lady-fingers on the buttered paper.

Collapsing beside the range and opening the oven door, Sally stared with fixed attention at the pair of big fat turkeys roasting side by side.

"Yes, 'tis; bakin' like a house a-fire; yes, 'tis."

"But we don't want it to bake like a house a-fire," said Prairie, wheeling round with much concern. "Gently, very gently, is the rule for fowls," and dropping down by Sally's side she anxiously peered into the oven.

"Oh! they're browning very nicely — in fact, de-lic-iously!" with a girlish little gurgle of delight as she sniffed the savory odor from the oven. "Dear me! that was a false alarm that fairly set my heart on the jump."

"Yes, 'twas," serenely confessed Sally; "a hue an' cry 'bout nothin'; yes, 'twas."

She left the fowls to sputter in the oven, and began to pluck the feathers from a wild goose she had scalded at the sink.

"Now for the next," said Prairie, returning to her lady-fingers, her rosy face aglow with zeal to make the wedding preparations a complete success. "I hope that cranberry jelly won't run down into a limp, disgraceful pool, instead of towering proudly up as we have planned."

"No, 'twon't," said Sally, stretching out her arm to spring a latch and show the contents of a safe within her reach. "Risin' up as peart as ever; yes, 'tis."

Upon one shelf a mound of ruby jelly reared itself aloft and shed a brilliant glow around the cut-glass dish in which it stood.

"Well, that is lovely," Prairie said, with an admiring nod. "Cranberry jelly isn't such an easy thing to make just right that one can feel exactly safe till it is firmly set."

"No, 'tain't," was Sally's ready answer.

Now appeared the brisk young ranchman on the busy scene.

"Prairie, I've some welcome news for you," said he. "Whom should I meet in town this morning but Dr. Whistler, who had just come in on the train."

"O, John! that is the best news I've heard for many a day," said Prairie joyfully. "I feared that Dr. Whistler would be too busy with his patients down there in the Indian Territory to accept our wedding invitation. He has come for that, of course."

"Yes," said John, "and he is also on his way to Washington on business for his tribe. You know a bill is pending for the Government to buy another big slice of the Indian Territory to be turned over to white settlers? The present Oklahoma is a

mere garden patch compared to the extensive tract Uncle Sam now has his eye upon."

"Well," said Prairie, "highly as I esteem him in most respects, I must say I am ashamed of our revered uncle for his greediness in swallowing the Indian possessions. He takes whole reservations at one mouthful, and doesn't seem in the least to mind that he's astonishing the world."

"That is an undeniable fact, though rather strongly expressed," laughed John. "Dr. Whistler will be detained in town on business a day or two. He sent his compliments to 'Mrs. Sparkling Eyes' and will come out with Kearn and Rose when Ebenezer brings them from the train to-morrow afternoon."

"Grand old Whistler!" burst out Prairie enthusiastically. "I can't begin to tell you, John, how proud I am of him. He has turned out nobly, even though he's not in Congress, as fourteen years ago I hoped he would be by this time. That he has had to stay outside is the fault of our Government for keeping its heel on the downtrodden Indians so long," she added, with an air of wise conviction that amused her husband.

The first batch of almonds was now ready to be salted, and Piokee poured them on a plate, and sitting down by Miriam began to shell more nuts.

"I must make thwee patty-cakes much bigger 'an

'e west," planned Miriam. "One for Aunt Wose, one for Uncle Kearn, an' 'e biggest one of all for my dear Doctor, 'cause he bwought my Dewdwop pick-a-back in a bag to mamma when she was a wee papoose. You tell 'e stowy, mamma; it's so interwesting I do love to hear it."

"Bless you, little one," said Prairie, "I've told it so often you must know it word for word. But I like to tell it more and more. No great wonder, though; for treasures like our Dewdrop don't go riding every day on the back of a young Indian chief, to be dropped off as a welcome gift into a lonesome little claim girl's arms." Here Mamma Prairie, as Piokee called her foster-mother, gave the bonny red-brown maid of her adoption a very loving smile.

There was no record of Piokee's birthday, but from the annals of her babyhood she was about sixteen.

Her mother may have had a trace of white blood from some generations back, else how explain the curves and dimples of the daughter's finely molded face, the serious little mouth that kept demure guard of pretty teeth, the eyes, large, clear and soft, whose dark calm gave no hint of the moroseness and unrest that blight her race?

By no means talkative was our young Indian girl, but at times she sparkled with enchanting mis-

chief that dispelled her gravity and made her brightly winsome. A reposeful voice and peaceful manner indicated the content that filled Piokee's life. She was not given to outbursts of affection, but for those whose care had been a shelter since her friendless infancy her devotion was unstinted.

Blue-eyed Miriam with her floating golden hair and dainty exacting ways she regarded as a marvel of perfection. The bewitching tot did not object to being placed upon a pedestal as Piokee's ideal of a model child, and adorned her high position with becoming grace, considering she had been petted by adoring relatives all her life.

"I wasn't so old as Dewdrop is now when I helped your Uncle Kearn hold down a claim while your grandpapa went away to earn food and clothes for us. A drouth had spoiled our crops that year and we were very poor," began Prairie, gratifying Miriam's wish to hear the oft-repeated story of how Dewdrop came to them. "There was no one but myself to keep house, for we were motherless — your Uncle Kearn and I. Your great-aunt Abigail, who afterward came West and settled on the claim next ours, was then living in the East.

"We hadn't many friends on that lonesome claim. Your papa, who of course was a fine-looking, agreeable boy, came over from the station twelve miles off, every now and then, and our nearest neighbor,

a nice old crazy gentleman named Mr. Welch, used to visit us quite often. Then there was Miss Sally Spratt, and Dr. Whistler who lived not far away.

"Whistler was then an uncivilized Indian boy, but he was bright and manly, and I thought it a pity that he didn't even know when P was standing on its head, or that the world is round."

"Why don't you ever tell about 'e pwetty name?" asked Miriam. "Papa always has to tell me 'at. Whistler oost to call you Sparkling Eyes."

Prairie only laughed, and went on with her story. "Then, too, Whistler was quite rich for an Indian boy, and I feared if he remained so ignorant he would be cheated out of all the land and ponies his shrewd old father left him. So I undertook to teach him something. And a dreadful time I had of it. But I worked away the best I could, and coaxed and scolded him into learning his lessons, and now he's Dr. Whistler, with a comfortable income from his property which he is generously using in his work among his people."

"Oh! now you've come to 'e 'nagerie. Lots and lots of pwitty animals, and a fwightful little wattle-snake," said Miriam, who knew the story all by heart.

"Yes, I had collected a menagerie of small wild animals that I was very fond of. Whistler helped me hunt food for them, and I had my hands full taking care of them and Uncle Kearn. But for all

that I was sometimes lonesome, and I often wished I had a little sister."

"Now my Dewdwop's coming," anticipated Miriam, with breathless interest. "One day Whistler came pwancing up — you tell it, mamma."

"Yes, one day Whistler came prancing up on horseback with Dewdrop on his back, snugly tucked into a bag — all but her head, and that was covered with a blanket. I thought it was an animal for my menagerie, and Whistler made me guess what it could be."

"Oh, oh!" cried Miriam, as she clapped her hands and squeezed a patty-cake with wild delight. "Didn't you feel tickled, Dewdwop, hiding in 'e bag while mamma guessed you were a little bear?"

"I was only eight months old, and didn't know what a funny joke I was helping Dr. Whistler play," replied the heroine of the infantile exploit, smiling demurely while she cracked a nut and dropped out the kernel.

"The poor abused midget," resumed Prairie, "was strapped to a board inside the bag, and her face was not so clean as our dainty Dewdrop now loves to have it."

"Oh! how dweadful; but you couldn't help it and you needn't feel one bit ashamed," said Miriam, and she gave Piokee's face a pitying pat that left a funny daub of dough on the tip of her clear-cut nose.

"Well, I adopted the cunning waif, as Whistler said she had no parents, and called her Dewdrop, which is the meaning of her Indian name, Piokee. I brought her up the best I could with the help of Mother Grabendike, a dear Quaker lady, who had been a friend to me and who kept our Dewdrop four years while I was away at school. And here she is, a credit to the family." Prairie beamed again on Piokee, who smiled back and by a sudden impulse seized her foster-mother's hand and rubbed her cheek against it in a soft caress.

"But, dear me! I'm done with the lady-fingers, and it's time to stuff the goose," heeded Prairie, "so I must cut the story short.

"Your lovely Aunt Rose, whom your papa called Sweetbrier — because she had some pretty, willful ways that he compared to naughty little thorns — once came to see us and was carried down into a deep creek by a fiery pony she was riding. Whistler saved her life and also fished Uncle Kearn and me out of the watery deep, for of course we both plunged in to rescue her. We were escorting Aunt Rose home to Grandmamma Bowers's where she was visiting. We had left the baby with Miss Sally Spratt, who was very fond of her.

"A bad man, who, I grieve to say, was our honest Ebenezer's father, tried to jump our claim, but failed. He robbed a railway train and went to

prison, where he died before his term expired. He had a swarm of very naughty boys we called the Yellowjackets, they were so much like troublesome wasps. Three of them especially, were simply dreadful. I'm happy to relate, however, that Daniel has turned out to be a very respectable young preacher, much to the surprise of every one, including his fellow Yellowjackets. Jacob is now a Choctaw squawman in the Indian Territory, and if they have the ghost dance there, as they are having in Dakota, I'm very sure he will be foremost in the mischief."

With this conclusion Prairie turned her attention to the goose, which Sally held dangling and dripping at her side, so absorbed was she in the revival of the old memories.

Some years after Mr. Wilde secured the claim that Prairie helped "hold down," a sudden rise in real estate enabled him to sell his property for a very high price.

Seized with the same speculative spirit that attacked her brother, Aunt Abigail sold her farm adjoining his for a large profit.

John and Prairie were then newly married, and were waiting to settle on a ranch in a good location. After viewing well the prospect, Mr. Wilde, Aunt Abigail and John bought a large tract of land in Southern Kansas near the Indian Territory, of which each took one third. Prairie's father and Aunt Abi-

gail combined to make one home, and John and Prairie in their pleasant, roomy ranch house were their nearest neighbors.

John's mother did not live to share her son's home, into which she would have been most fondly welcomed, for a few weeks after John and Prairie's marriage she had a sudden illness that closed her gentle life. Kearn had gone through college, had married Sweetbrier Rose, and was now a rising lawyer in a thriving young city of the State.

Whistler had also gained an education. He had taken his diploma at a medical college of repute, and was now a missionary doctor among his people in the Indian Territory.

"The eggs have given out and the chocolate cakes are not frosted," said Prairie to Piokee shortly after dinner. "You might saddle Chipmunk and go after those five dozen that Priscilla Winslow promised. I expected Floy would bring them over, but something must have happened to prevent her. You can stay with Floy a while. Frosting the cakes will be the last work of the day, and the eggs will not be needed for some hours."

It was a delightful afternoon in autumn. Piokee was rejoiced to take a ride across the sunny prairie and through the squirrel-haunted wood to Mr. Winslow's, and Floy was a lively young friend whom she dearly loved to visit.

Mr. Winslow was a minister from New England who preached on Sunday at the schoolhouse where his daughter Priscilla taught school through the week.

The Winslows lived on a farm, and Priscilla had a hennery that her younger sister, Floy, who studied with her father, cared for while Priscilla was at school.

Mounted on her sleek bay pony, Chipmunk, Piokee rode off with a basket on her arm. She had gone about half-way to Mr. Winslow's when she espied a girlish figure on a large black horse racing toward her at a reckless pace across the prairie.

CHAPTER II.

A WILD YOUNG SQUAW.

ON meeting Piokee the rider jerked her horse's rein and checked his speed with such a sudden lurch it seemed as if she must have bounded from the saddle; but she kept her seat with steady poise and laughing unconcern.

"Well, Dewdrop, now I've met you I must stop the race!" exclaimed the madcap rider, Floy Winslow. "You see, Bub Merrill, our new chore boy, just declared I couldn't ride over to your house in less than thirty minutes and a half. I've only been —let's see—twelve minutes and three quarters, and see how far I am!" triumphantly inspecting a watch she had brought along to time herself.

Floy's curly yellow hair was cut short and parted at the side, and she wore a sailor hat, a shirt waist and a reefer jacket, which gave her the appearance of a jolly, handsome boy.

"That is the quickest time I ever knew a minis-

ter's horse to make," replied Piokee, with a smile. "But were you bringing eggs to us?" glancing with much apprehension at a basket perched before Floy on the saddle, and then at several ominous yellow streaks oozing down her short blue riding skirt.

"Yes, here they are," said Floy. "Why, something must have happened to them!" uplifting the basket in amazement. "Dear me! here is a hole in one end that I didn't notice, and most of them have slipped out on the way and the rest are mashed to jelly. How careless I have been to bounce along at such a pace, and Mrs. Bowers with a lot of wooden-wedding cake needing to be frosted with these eggs. O, dear! what will Priscilla say?"

"Well, you didn't mean to do it," said Piokee comfortingly. "Haven't you more eggs that I can get if I go back with you?"

"I gathered all there were at dinner time, but I suspect there is a stolen nest or two up in the hay-mow of the barn, that Bub Merrill might search if you could wait for him. He's very slow, but pretty sure."

Having explained that she had ample time to await Bub's leisure movements, Piokee pursued her way to Mr. Winslow's with Floy.

"Priscilla pays me for taking care of the hennery, and I shall have the eggs deducted from my wages," said Floy conscientiously. "But it will cripple me

in money matters, for eggs are twenty cents a dozen now," she added with a rueful laugh.

"I suppose the hennery keeps you pretty busy out of study hours," Piokee said.

"Yes, it does. Pris thought she'd like to have spring chickens next winter, so she's set the incubator and I have to watch the lamp."

"That must be a dreadful care," observed Piokee, trembling for the tender lives at the mercy of well-meaning, but careless Floy.

"O, dear! there's no describing it," sighed Floy. "So much depending on the way you turn a wick. Too far up, the eggs are cooked; too far down, they're chilled to death. Bub Merrill faithfully agreed to watch the lamp while I'm away, but he has such a mania for making experiments I'm just afraid he'll try to find out how much heat the chicks could stand and still come out alive. If he does, he'll roast them in the shell as sure as fate."

The girls rode faster and soon reached the hennery, where, to their relief, they found the lamp burning at the proper temperature.

Floy's fear of Bub's experiments was partly realized, however, for he had pulled the egg drawer out, exposing the contents to a perilous draught of air, and was on his knees peering through a paper funnel to inspect an egg, which he was holding hazardously near the lamplight.

"I'm candlin' 'em ter see if they're alive an' well," said he. "This yer's goin' ter hatch. Kin see him squirmin' in the shell. But this yer's bad. So's this yer. An' this yer," holding up three more. "Am afraid you're reck'nin' on a lot o' chicks that'll never hatch," was his discouraging announcement.

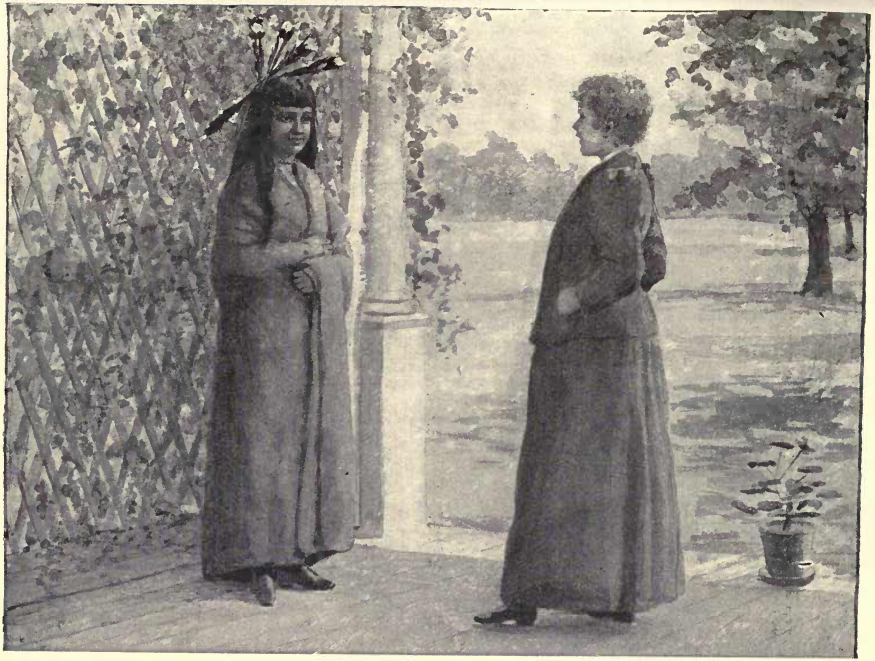
"I don't believe they're far enough along to squirm yet, and you must be only guessing whether they're alive or not," was Floy's correct surmise. "There! now you've dropped an egg — though to be sure that happened to be spoilt — and you mustn't touch another one," whereupon she promptly shut the drawer.

"Hum! 'tain't the fust egg that's been smashed to-day, I reckin," Bub retorted, with a gleeful glance at Floy's bespattered skirt.

"Not by several dozens," candidly admitted Floy. "But you must find at least one nest brimful of eggs to make up for the mischief you did by daring me to try a race while carrying eggs to market."

Bub obediently strolled off to begin the hunt, while Floy gathered all the new-laid eggs in the hennery for Piokee's basket.

"I'm glad you can stay a while," said she. "Papa's holding a meeting in another neighborhood this afternoon, and except Bub Merrill and myself there isn't any one at home but mamma, who is sleeping off a headache in her room, and my



PIOKEE AND FLOY — "JUST FOR FUN."

double cousin Ellery Winslow just out from Boston this week."

"Is he a young boy?" asked Piokee.

"O, no! you'll think him very much grown up," said Floy. "He's a Harvard freshman, but his optic nerve has given out, so he's dropped his Greek and Latin a while, and is taking a vacation. He means to improve his time while out of college studying the Indian question. That is all the fashion now."

"Well," said Piokee, "I'm afraid he'll find that far more trying to his optic nerve than working over Greek and Latin. My people have a long, sad history," she added thoughtfully.

"That is true," said Floy, growing thoughtful too. "Ellery is an Indian rights man. He has already made a prisoner of himself in papa's study, pondering over broken treaties. But he has never seen an Indian, to speak of, and I don't believe he'd know one from a copper statue. You're so proud of being a little red girl, Dewdrop, would you mind meeting Ellery and showing him how a real live Indian looks?"

"But I've no feathers in my hair. I should disappoint him," said Piokee, with a smile.

"Yes, I suppose you would," frankly agreed Floy, with a critical eye on the neat little tailor-made girl. "Of course he'd like you better if you were

a blanket Indian. Oh! you might pretend to be one, just for fun. I've got a lot of gorgeous feathers that our roosters shed. You might unbraid your hair and stick them straight up all around your head, and we've a bed blanket of the brightest red, that you could wrap round yourself."

Floy's mischievous plan was irresistible, and almost before she knew it Piokee was carrying it out. Floy smuggled the feathers and blanket from the house, and the grain-room of the hennery was made the dressing-room.

Presently a wild-looking young squaw left the hennery and sought a latticed corner of the front piazza to wait for Ellery Winslow, whom Floy conducted from the study.

CHAPTER III.

COLD BLAST AND FAUQUA.

ELLERY was a straight, slim youth of nineteen, with blond curly hair like Floy's. Indeed, if he had been her brother he could hardly have resembled her more closely. Somewhat formal of speech was Ellery, but he had a pleasant voice and a gentlemanly manner. On account of his affected optic nerve he wore a pair of gold-rimmed glasses which gave him quite a scholarly air.

"Ellery, here's an Indian girl you'll be glad to meet," was Floy's introduction of her cousin to the statuesque little figure in the gay red blanket.

"Ah! is this really one of the Nation's Wards as yet entirely untamed?" was Ellery's rather bookish salutation. "What a novel sight. But—I beg your pardon," recovering from his curious surprise enough to lift his hat and bow politely to the little squaw, who returned a dignified nod. "I believe you didn't give the name of this young l-lady,

Floy," he reminded his cousin, searching his memory in some confusion for a rule of etiquette to aid him in the rather trying situation.

"Her name is Piokee," said Floy.

"I suppose she hails from over in the Indian Territory, and of course she doesn't understand the white man's language. But she bows like a Beacon Street girl, and is as self-poised as a young princess. I don't feel free to treat her with the curiosity one usually bestows on the untutored savage." And the self-possessed young gentleman from Boston actually grew fidgety beneath Piokee's calm gaze.

"I think she'd understand swapee," suggested Floy. "It might help you to break the ice."

"Ah, yes! an Indian always likes to trade, and I would like to have some of those gorgeous feathers in her hair. They must have been the plumage of some curious bird."

At this mistaken fancy concerning the rooster feathers Floy's eyes danced, and Piokee almost spoiled her wild Indian tableau by allowing a demure smile to flit across her face. But Ellery was detaching from his watch chain a brightly enameled charm, the badge of his college society, which he was recklessly prepared to sacrifice for a portion of Piokee's feathers.

"Swapee," said Ellery, holding out the charm in one hand, while with the other he began to pluck

his curly crown, as a sign that he wished to bargain for her resplendent plumage.

"Um! swapee," assented she, accepting the charm and bending her head to let him choose the feathers he admired most.

He took some shining green ones flecked with white and gold, and pinned them to his coat as carefully as if they were a bouquet of the choicest flowers.

"Thanks," said he, "I shall prize them very highly, as a souvenir of my introduction to a charming young Indian princess." Then aside to Floy, "Of course that compliment is wasted, as she doesn't understand a word I'm saying, but on the other hand I'm safe from the risk that she will regard my sincere opinion as flattery, after the manner of pale-faced girls."

Piokee was now suddenly seized with a desire to depart, and with another Beacon Street bow to Ellery she turned and walked away.

Ellery watched her till she disappeared, with the impression that the graceful wild Indian maid described in romance existed in real life, and had not been overpraised. It was with renewed interest that he went back to the perusal of the broken treaties.

On their way to the hennery the girls were overtaken by Bub Merrill, who had found a perfect

treasure of a stolen nest, and had his cap well filled with eggs.

"Now, Bub," said Floy, "of course you know just who this is, but you mustn't breathe a word to Mr. Ellery Winslow before to-morrow night. I want him to see two tableaux — one of Miss Dewdrop as she might have been, and the other as she really is. I know all about her lovely wooden-wedding dress, and won't he be astonished at the contrast?"

Bub agreed, and returning to the grain room Piokee hastily threw off the blanket, braided up her long thick hair, donned her hat and jacket and became her civilized self once more.

Wrapping the eggs in scraps of paper, to guard against another accident, she packed them in the basket and took quick leave of Floy, lest Ellery Winslow saunter out and discover the disguise.

Piokee was not given to playing pranks, and some doubt assailed her whether she had done right in imposing the ideal Indian maiden on the unsuspecting youth from Boston.

Following this thought there came a thrill of gladness that she was a civilized girl, and not the wild young squaw she might have been had not her lot been changed in infancy.

Although raised above the miserable condition of her people, Piokee had for them a very loyal feel-

ing. Mamma Prairie was a warm supporter of Indian rights, and had the deepest sympathy for their misfortunes. Many chapters of their pathetic history had Piokee learned from Dr. Whistler, who had made occasional visits to the little red-brown girl who had taken the romantic ride to fortune on his back, and in whom he claimed an equal interest with Mamma Prairie.

Piokee had her dream of going to her people, when she was older, to teach them something of the new life in which she had been reared. Cooking classes flourished in her fancy, with rows of dusky, trimly-aproned maids waging war on dreadful Indian messes, and skillfully concocting the dainty, healthful dishes she had been taught to make.

So absorbed was she in her favorite dream for the uplifting of her race that she did not observe that she had reached a lonely quarter of the timber until her pony gave a sudden start and waked her to a consciousness that she was in a most unusual situation.

Looking up she saw two Indians, a man and woman, riding very close to her, one upon each side. They had emerged from a cross road, and suddenly hemmed her in, almost jostling against her in the narrow road. They were wrapped in blankets and the man was decked with grotesque

ornaments, among which was a ghastly row of naked little china dolls dangling in halters from his scalp-lock.

The man caught hold of Chipmunk's bridle, looking up and down the road to see that no one was approaching. "Little tame squaw name Piokee?" he asked in English quite unusual for one so wildly dressed.

"Yes; that is my Indian name, but they call me Dewdrop," was her wondering reply.

"Young chief carry wild papoose to white man's cabin? Grass grow many times, papoose now little tame squaw?"

"Why, yes," with still more wonder.

The Indian gave a grunt of mingled satisfaction at his own sagacity in tracing Piokee's history, and disapproval of the "tame" system by which she had been reared.

His next movement heightened the alarm she had begun to feel; indeed, it transfixed her with actual fright. Still grasping Chipmunk's bridle he whirled about and led him galloping down the cross road, the squaw fast bringing up the rear. This was a byway seldom used, except when wood was hauled from the timber that extended in a wide belt by the river.

Having hurried down the cross road some way, the Indian let go of Chipmunk's bridle and turned

into a narrow path, beaten by cattle going to and from a watering-place. Piokee and the squaw followed, single file, until the three alighted at an old log hut, once used as a wood chopper's shelter, but now deserted.

Here the Indians appeared to have set up a temporary camp. A slab of bacon and a bag of meal were hanging from a spike inside the hut, and smoldering brands were lying in the rude rock fireplace. The three sat down, Indian fashion, on the floor, and the talk that had been dropped so suddenly in the road began again.

"Big Injun name Cold Blast. Old squaw, Fauqua," said the man. "I have one squaw more, long time back, name Dancing Feet, Piokee's mother."

"But," said Piokee, with a quick-drawn breath, "Dr. Whistler always thought my father was killed by accident while hunting in the Indian Territory just before my mother died."

"Cold Blast, Piokee's father," the man insisted, with a nod that set the hanging dolls bobbing in an agitated circle round his scalp-lock. "Get big wound — pull through — no kill. Dancing Feet die when I far off. Feel sad. Go off be white soldier's scout. Learn talk like white man, feel like wild Injun all same. Marry Fauqua, feel heap more sad."

The meek little squaw, who bore the name Fauqua, kept an unobtrusive silence while she strung

the beads she had taken from a gayly ornamented bag suspended at her side.

"Piokee think Cold Blast lie," went on the man. "I tattoo oak leaf high up on wrong arm when she one-moon-old papoose."

"Yes, my left arm is tattooed in that way; of course you are my father as you know so much about me," said Piokee, dismissing all suspicion that the Indian was deceiving her.

But she could not feel the gladness natural to a daughter who has found a long-lost father, for Cold Blast had a stern face and forbidding manner that impressed her with unspeakable dread. However, she resolved to face the situation bravely, and strive to cultivate a warmer heart for this unwelcome stranger who had come to claim her as his child.

"You must go home with me — both of you," said she, "and see Mamma Prairie and good Mr. Bowers, whom you will want to thank for having been so very, very kind to me. And you can see our little Miriam, who is oh! so sweet and cunning, and be introduced to Dr. Whistler, the young chief who took me to the white man's cabin. There's to be a wooden wedding at the ranch to-morrow evening — and — of course — you'll be invited."

Piokee said the words slowly, thinking of the ludicrous unfitness of Cold Blast and Fauqua for even the simple entertainment in prospect at the ranch.

But in response to this Cold Blast scowled and shook his head so fiercely the dolls went off into another agony, and nearly broke their halters with spasmodic writhing.

"Not tell white people, not tell young chief Piokee find father. They say I wait long time, not have little tame squaw. Piokee keep sly, hide here. Night come, steal off, ride fast. Go where Injun live, be wild squaw."

At this proposal Piokee's brain fairly reeled. She now realized that Cold Blast had laid a plan for her abduction, by which she was to be snatched off from those who were so dear to her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RANSOM.

"BUT surely," pleaded Piokee, "you don't want to carry me away from Mamma Prairie when I am so well taken care of and so happy here? The Indian is so very poor, you would have no food to spare for me."

"Piokee help old squaw hoe corn," said Cold Blast. "Camp out in timber, pick pecans. Earn heap money."

"Oh! I've never worked out doors except to weed the flowers. And those pecan camps — I have heard of them," shudderingly. "The pickers suffer so from cold, and go hungry very often. Indeed, it is too terrible to think of." And the poor little "princess" clasped her slender hands above the basket in her lap and sat like one bereft of hope.

The part of the uncivilized young squaw she had playfully acted for Ellery Winslow's entertainment now seemed a mockery, and her romantic dream of

flitting to her people as an enlightening spirit had lost its charm.

Between herself and that deplorable race whose blood was in her veins there now appeared a great gulf which it seemed impossible to cross. On one side was the sweet, contented life she had always known, on the other want and misery, to which she was a stranger. Mamma Prairie, Miriam, her happy home — she must go back to them at all events.

Suddenly a new hope seized Piokee, and she eagerly proposed to pay a ransom to her father, strange as that may seem.

"I have thirty dollars — so many gold pieces," holding up six fingers. "They are Christmas gifts from dear Mr. Bowers, but I can use them as I like, and I am sure he would be glad to have me give them to you, if you are in need. Will you take the gold, and go away and leave me with Mamma Prairie?"

Cold Blast gave a meditative grunt and sat as if considering the offer, while Piokee waited in suspense, feeling that her fate for life depended on his answer.

"I take money, go off visit Pawnee Injun, make medicine," he said at last. "Make good medicine, I come back get Piokee when round moon dark. Piokee keep sly, watch sharp — watch every day. Find bush hanging down on big tree got no insides

on wide road, steal off in dark night, come here. Ride very fast go where wild Injun live. Make bad medicine, maybe little tame squaw's hair turn white old father never come back."

Piokee felt a sting of conscience at this pathetic ending of her sire's speech, but such was her anxiety to escape sharing his condition that she strove to steel her heart against him.

It was only a provisional ransom, after all, but it was the best that she could do, and there would be a few precious days before the parting, if it must come then. She solemnly agreed to keep the secret, and to bring the money to the hut next morning, before daybreak, if she could steal away, and thus avoid all chance of being seen.

It was almost five o'clock when she reached home. In the sweet-smelling kitchen the cheerful preparations were going on. Aunt Abigail was there, dispatching whatever work her hands could find to do.

"Am I very late with the eggs?" Piokee asked, setting her basket on the table.

"Just in time," said Prairie cheerfully, "though Sally is a little more than ready to begin the frosting. She has been churning the empty air with the egg-beater for something like two minutes, I believe," she added with a smile as Sally seized the eggs and dodged into the pantry.

Piokee sank into a chair, overcome with a re-

action of the nervous strain and fairly shivering with suppressed emotion.

"Why, dear child, how cold and blue you look!" said Prairie with concern. "You should have worn a warmer jacket than that light spring cutaway. The wind has changed into the west, and the air is very raw."

Ah! how Piokee longed to seek the shelter of her foster-mother's loving arms, and tell her what had happened in the wood. If she could only fall asleep and wake to find it all a dream — this vision of the grim barbarian who had come to claim her as his child, and against whom she was so undutifully rebelling!

"It's a shakin' chill," said Ebenezer, on his way toward the wood-box with his long arms twined about a load of hickory. "I ust ter hev 'em fit to kill."

"Yes, 'tis," said Sally, bursting into sight again to show her sympathy. She came in square collision with Ebenezer's tall, gaunt form, but by a dexterous feat of strength on the part of both, Ebenezer kept his grip on the wood and Sally saved the eggs. "Yes; 'tis a shakin' chill. Chair's a-fairly dancin' under her." She vanished like a flash once more, and banged the pantry door behind her.

"Looks to me more like hysterics," said Aunt Abigail. "Did you come across a rattlesnake, or

any other dangerous creature on the road?" transfixing Piokee with a keen glance through her spectacles.

Piokee shook her head and made a desperate effort to control her chattering teeth.

"Calls back ole mem'ries of how I ust ter shake," said Ebenezer, backing to the door when he had shed his load, his mild eyes still regarding Piokee with reflective pity. "Remember how you cured me, Mis' Bowers?"

"Yes; with some ague root that Whistler gave me. But I haven't had a bit of that for years, and don't know where to get it," said Prairie, with an anxious eye on Piokee. "How strange to think that Whistler is a regular physican now, prescribing civilized pills and powders instead of 'medicine bush.' That is what he called the ague root. How fortunate, too, that he's in town to-night, for Dewdrop really seems to need a doctor, and I think you'd better go for him at once."

"No, no," protested Piokee, much dismayed at having made herself the object of so much attention. "I'm not ill, indeed I'm not. Please don't send for him," she begged, thinking of her errand to the hut next morning, and desiring that above all others Dr. Whistler might not come till it was done. With this she started from the chair and escaped upstairs.

"If it is hysterics, it's an Indian quirk," observed

Aunt Abigail. "As for that young quack — Dr. Whistler — I haven't a speck of confidence in his ability. An Indian can't be trusted out of sight, and more than likely he has ground that very root you thought was such a cure-all years ago into powders, mixed it up in pills and steeped it for a juice to fill the vials of that medicine case he carries round with such an honest air."

"Charitably, more charitably!" laughed John, emerging from the dining-room with little Miriam. "That's rather hard on the medical school of which Whistler is a member in good standing, but perhaps that is the root of his success in curing stubborn ailments."

"Well, Prairie," said Aunt Abigail, tying on her bonnet to go home, "Dewdrop had better take a thorough sweat to-night. Of course you can't sweat out the Indian, but if she's taken cold a sweat may do her good. I wonder if the child was warm enough this afternoon; you've coddled her so much 'twould be a marvel if she didn't sneeze at every breath of air. I didn't like her look of misery, and maybe it would be as well to send for Dr. Whistler if she doesn't chirk up by supper-time. Perhaps a red-skinned humbug is no likelier to kill a patient than a white one."

The doctor was not sent for, for Piokee came to supper outwardly calm, and quietly attentive to the

wants of Miriam, whose place was next hers at the table. Prairie thereupon concluded that she was not really ill, and that the west wind must have caused the shivering spell.

"Reckon 'twarn't a shakin' chill — 'pears like we was all mistaken. She's a playin' on her fiddle," noted Ebenezer, dropping in to have a chat with Sally.

"No; twarn't," agreed Sally, as a plaintive strain of music floated down from Piokee's chamber. "'Tis that there gypsy song, 'I dreamed I Dwelt in Marble Halls.' Plays jes' like a angel, don't she?"

"Yes, but I'd ruther hear lively music. 'Skip ter my Lou' suits my taste. Reckon that's a fav'rite tyune with all the boys. Don't seem ter be onpop'lar with you girls."

"Yes, 'tis," said Sally, warding off the sentimental turn Ebenezer was inclined to take. "Yes, 'tis onpop'lar with us girls. 'Skip' don't suit our taste — not by a long jog."

More than thirty years had spread their coats of tan upon the amiable faces of this honest pair of helpers, but being in a state of single blessedness they were still numbered with the boys and girls in Western phrase.

"Wa-al, I'd like ter ask a faver, Sally," ventured Ebenezer, not without great fear and trembling. "Nex' time we're at a party an' air playin' 'Skip



PIOKEE AND HER VIOLIN.

ter my Lou,' I'd be mightily obleeged ef you would skip ter me a leetle of'ner than ter the other boys."

Sally dodged behind the cupboard door to hide her pleasure at these words, and then came back with an air of cool indifference.

"Wa-al, ef pardners is skurser than persimmons in the spring mought be I will," she said.

Piokee loved her violin — how fondly none but she herself would ever know. It had a song for every mood. She had taken lessons of Priscilla Winslow, who had had good musical training in the East, and she played with more than ordinary skill the simple airs which she had learned.

"My Dewdwop's violin is cwying. I must go and see what ails it," said Miriam, who was enjoying a good-night frolic with her father when the wail of music reached her ears.

With her tiny terrier, Frisky, in her arms she stole upstairs.

Piokee stood before the window gazing out on the moonlit lawn and wondering if the pecan pickers had begun to camp out in the timber, and if they were cold when night came on. Before long she might be among them, and who would care like dear Mamma Prairie whether she were warmly clad or not when the shrill wind whistled through the forest?

Miriam climbed a chair and squeezed herself be-

tween Piokee and the window-sill, claiming the attention that was never denied her.

"Don't cwy, poor music," she commanded gently, laying a caressing hand on the bow. "What ails it, Dewdwop? I fought your violin was always happy," in a puzzled tone.

No answer from the sad musician. She laid aside her violin and dropped her cheek on Miriam's golden head and clasped the little girl and little dog tightly in her arms.

"Oh-h! you hug me so hard. 'Cause you love me so much?" panted Miriam, struggling for breath while Frisky barked a sharp objection to the double squeeze.

"Yes, precious one," thought Piokee, still silent. "I love you so much it would break my heart to leave you. Oh! that dreadful man who wants to carry me away. But I mustn't have such wicked thoughts of my father. I must not break my promise. But how can I keep the secret from Mamma Prairie and from Dr. Whistler? He says an Indian who has the bad heart is very sly and treacherous. If I am hiding something I shall be sly and treacherous, and I wonder if he'll find it out and think I have the bad heart, too?"

CHAPTER V.

THE MOONLIGHT RIDE.

LONG before the break of day, Piokee was stepping noiselessly about her room, getting ready for her errand to the hut. She had no need of groping in the dark, for a full moon cast a flood of light into the room and made the world outside too bright, by far, to suit her stealthy purpose.

Slipping down the back stairs, she unlocked the kitchen door; and going to the stable, she led her pony out into a shadowy angle of the building, where she saddled him in breathless haste.

At this uncanny hour, when none but those still things that flit about at night were stirring, she sped across the prairie to the cover of the wood. Within its shadowy ambush was the brooding silence that precedes the gray dawn of an autumn day.

Piokee started at the turbulent beating of her own heart, and wished the woodpeckers were awake to keep her company.

It was with the greatest dread that she looked forward to another meeting with her father, and her conscience was upbraiding her in two ways; both for her undutiful thoughts of him, and for the concealment that had brought about her secret ride from home.

She was haunted with the fear that he would change his mind, and after she had paid the ransom would insist on carrying her away then and there. It was a thick wild stretch of timber further on, in which pursuit might be eluded, even in the daytime, until they had crossed the border of the Indian Territory. Over there she could not be retaken from her father, for Mrs. Bowers had no legal right to claim Piokee, although she called her an adopted child.

Piokee was about to turn into the narrow path, when Chipmunk all at once drew back and shook with fright. There was a dark misshapen-looking object crouching at the entrance of the path. Piokee also trembled when she saw it.

It was Fauqua, sitting there asleep, closely muffled in her blanket with her head upon her knees. The sound of Chipmunk's hoofs awoke her and she started up, and, stepping out into the cross road, greeted Piokee with a soft-spoken, "How?"

"Cold Blast sleep sound, snore loud. Old Injun scare little tame squaw. Stay here," she murmured.

Piokee felt an instant liking for this friendly little step-mother who had stolen out to meet her and allay her fears.

"Oh! and you've been waiting here for me — how good you are." She breathed her thanks in deep relief. "You can take the money, and I needn't wait a minute."

The gold was in a little iron box, the image of a frog, which Fauqua cautiously eyed by the light of the moon, but would not touch.

"Rich toad spit money — bad medicine," she said, shrinking back in childish fear as Piokee shook a coin from its mouth and dropped it back again.

"No; it's only a make-believe frog. See! its legs don't wiggle, and you needn't be afraid of it," Piokee said; "you might lose the money if I took it from the bank."

The superstitious squaw could hardly be convinced, but at last Piokee was allowed to drop the bank into the bag at Fauqua's side. The wearer tied the bag, however, with the wariest care.

"Rich toad crawl out — bad medicine," said she.

"I hope the gold will be of use to you as well as to my father," said Piokee; "you can buy some better food than meal and bacon, and you'll need new blankets for the winter."

Fauqua shook her head. "Cold Blast buy new gun, swapee pony, pay big boot," said she.

Piokee sighed to think her treasured Christmas coins would not be spent for comforts, but she hardly had expected it would be otherwise, knowing as she did that the uncivilized Indian values guns and ponies more than food and clothing.

Fauqua laid her hand on Chipmunk's mane as if she wished to hold some further conversation, and though intensely anxious to return home in the greatest haste, Piokee staid another minute.

"Cold Blast make good medicine, Piokee come soon where wild Injun live?" Fauqua wistfully asked.

"Oh! don't speak of it — how could I?" said Piokee, breaking into a convulsive moan. "I love Mamma Prairie and my beautiful happy home so dearly — O, so dearly! And Miriam, our sweet, sweet baby — it would break my heart to leave her." And the low wail ended in a sob.

"I treat Piokee good," said Fauqua still more wistfully. "Up-a-tree and Nanno feel proud; say tame sister know heap much. Learn wild Injun many things."

"Oh! are there — are there — two — children? No; surely, I haven't a little half-brother and sister?" grasping Fauqua's meaning, but feeling that she could not bear this added test to her resistance to be torn from home and loved ones.

Fauqua nodded yes.



"I TREAT PIOKEE GOOD," SAID FAUQUA WISTFULLY.

"Up-a-tree so old," holding up ten fingers. "Hunt game, ride wild pony. Heap brave boy. Nanno outgrow papoose. String beads, watch fire boil meat. Good little girl. Young Injuns stay with old squaw Keotach while I come here."

"Oh! do forgive me, but don't tell me any more about them," begged Piokee wretchedly. "It is all so sudden and so hard to understand."

Fauqua said no more, but turned and walked away, and Piokee hurried back along the cross road.

Those little wild things over there across the border — what were they to her, compared to Miriam? she argued to herself while rushing homeward like the wind. She did not need them, and since they had never known her they could never miss her as would Miriam, if they two were torn apart.

But Up-a-tree — the reckless little boy who cared for nothing but to hunt and ride wild ponies — would he never learn to read and work? And Nanno, the good little girl who strung the beads and watched the fire beneath the kettle — had she never, never seen a picture-book nor hugged a blue-eyed dolly in her arms? Well, that was one of life's sad happenings that could not be helped, lamented Piokee, while pitying tears for Up-a-tree and Nanno dropped into her lap.

She must fly back home, and if the medicine proved good, and she found the broken bough on

the hollow tree — why, she must try another ransom. Chipmunk was entirely her own, and dearly as she loved the little creature she would tie him to a tree out on the prairie in the night, and let her father take him as the price of her continued freedom.

Having laid this plan she suddenly remembered that it would not work, for her determined sire could carry her away and have the pony, too, as she must make the journey to the reservation on his back. Well, there was a little time to wait, and something might occur to free her from the bondage. The medicine might be bad, although she had a strong suspicion it would be as Cold Blast willed. Perhaps — who knew — the strongest lives are sometimes suddenly cut off — she checked herself in horror at the wicked wish that he might die and she become indeed the orphan she had thought herself.

The dreaded errand over, she alighted at the stable as a light gleamed forth from Mrs. Biddle's window at the tenant house a few rods distant, where the hired men were quartered. Very soon they would be out, she knew, to feed the sheep and cattle in the yards.

With a rush she put her pony in the stall, hung the saddle and the bridle on their nails, locked the stable door and laid the key beneath the beam outside, where it was kept at night, then flew toward the house.

As she was stealing upstairs, an alarm clock suddenly went off in Sally's room, and on the instant Sally bounded out of bed with a resounding thump.

Piokee did not stop to breathe till she was in her room.

The moonlight was now merging into daylight, and there was a stir throughout the house. Miriam, who was an early bird at all times, now awoke to greet the dawn, and hopping from her downy nest went chirping downstairs with her mother. Presently Piokee joined the family in the dining-room.

There she found Aunt Abigail with shawl and bonnet laid aside, unfolding a tale that puzzled all except Piokee, who was inwardly dismayed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHADOW GIRL.

"I CALLED your father up to eat his breakfast long before the roosters crowed, so that I could hurry over here to see about that ice cream you were going to make by sunrise, Prairie. The salt box danced a jig before my eyes all night and I took it for a warning that you'd sweeten the ice cream with salt instead of sugar if I didn't make haste to prevent it."

"Oh!" cried Miriam, "did 'e dancing salt box have a pair of legs and arms? And was it dwessed up like a dancing monkey, and was vere a hand organ and a wagged man 'at played a tune for it to dance by? O, Auntie — oh! it must have looked so fat and funny." And she fairly screamed with laughter.

"Mercy! what a queer child," said Aunt Abigail, forced to smile at this amusing picture drawn by Miriam's fertile fancy. "You can jump at the conclusion that it would have been no laughing matter

had there been a dancing burglar in this house. It was enough to make a whole gang dance for joy the way I found the back door stretched wide open, Sally scurrying around upstairs to dress, and all those tempting victuals in the pantry, and that silver teaset perched up on the sideboard."

Piokee gave an inward start, wondering if she could have failed to lock the door when she came in. Yes, she had thought she heard a footstep in the yard, which must have been Aunt Abigail's, and in her flurry she had fled upstairs and left the door ajar, no doubt, and it had been blown open by the wind.

"Why, that is very strange," said Prairie. "I am sure I locked the door myself after all the rest had gone to bed, last night."

"Well, the oddest part is yet to come," resumed her aunt. "As I was walking through the lane between this place and ours, I saw some one ahead of me on horseback. I am positive it was a girl — about the size of Dewdrop." Here the sharp eyes underneath the spectacles were turned upon Piokee, sitting breathless on the couch with Miriam at her side.

"She was riding like a whirlwind, and I thought it was some neighbor's girl, come to borrow paregoric for a baby in a fit, or something of the sort. I'm sure she turned in here. She seemed to swing

the gate without alighting from her horse; but a cloud must needs go scurrying across the moon just then, and I lost sight of her while she was on that winding road below the maple wind break."

"'Twarn't nobuddy after nothin' here," protested Sally. "I'd hev heerd 'em if they'd pounded on the kitchen door or rung the bell in front."

She was scudding round to set the table while devouring the mysterious report with a prodigious appetite. Aunt Abigail had given her a taste of it before the others came downstairs, but she swallowed every detail with unabated relish.

"No, 'twarn't — 'twarn't nobuddy after nothin' here," she reiterated for the twentieth time.

"Well, I saw no one as I came up, but where that rider vanished, like a streak of nothing, is a nut too hard for me to crack," Aunt Abigail responded with a staggered air.

All at once a new thought dawned on Sally, and the knives and forks which she was scattering round the table slid from her disabled grasp and clattered to the floor.

"I hope — it warn't — a shadder girl," she speculated, shying to one side, as if to dodge the spook.

"What is a shadow girl?" asked Miriam, snuggling close to Piokee.

"Somethin' that folks sees a-flittin' right afore the'r eyes, an' nobuddy never ketches up with,"

answered Sally, in a grewsome tone. "It kin onlock doors without a key."

"Fudge and fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Aunt Abigail, with such contempt that Sally gave a bound and fled the room in sore disgrace.

Aunt Abigail could have her own impressions, as forsooth the dancing salt box, but she could not tolerate a grain of superstition in another.

"Did 'e shadow girl scare Sally, or what made her talk so far down in 'e bottom of her froat?" still questioned Miriam, while she took possession of Piokee's hand, that trembled in her soft warm clasp.

"There isn't any shadow girl. Don't think about it any more, dear," answered Prairie, picking up the knives and forks. "That girl on horseback must have seen a light at Mrs. Biddle's and have ridden over there, as we were wrapped in darkness. But I can't imagine what would call one out before daylight, except a case of life or death — or a dancing salt box," looking merrily at her aunt.

Mrs. Biddle presently came in, and being questioned by Aunt Abigail, said that there had been no caller at the tenant house that morning. Hence the mystery of the shadow girl remained as deep as ever.

"Chipmunk must be sick," said Ebenezer, entering the kitchen after breakfast. "He was in a reek

o' sweat this mornin', when I went ter feed an' water him, an' Mr. Bowers has led him out ter see if he don't need some doctorin'."

Piokee, who was helping Prairie wash the breakfast china, slipped a cup into the scalding water she had poured into the pan, and deliberately plunged her hand in after it. This was torture, pure and simple, but like the antidote of causing pain to cure pain, it was keen delight compared to all that she was suffering in her mind.

"Why, Dewdrop, how you must have burned your hand!" Prairie said with pitying surprise. "You were thinking of the pony and forgot to cool the water. My dear child, how could you be so careless?"

"I don't mind it," said Piokee, with a wan smile flickering on her lips.

"I do," said Prairie, tenderly examining the reckless hand. "There, run away and get the liniment. You'll find it on the top shelf of the closet in the dining-room. You must nurse your hand to-day or it will be too sore to play the violin to-night. We should be sorry not to hear the pretty piece you have been practicing so faithfully."

Piokee left the room without another word.

"O, poor, poor hand! I must go and pity it," said Miriam, trotting after her.

"No, little dear, don't come just now. I'd rather

be alone awhile," Piokee said, kissing Miriam in the closet and then turning hastily to mount a chair she placed beside the shelves.

"Why, ven, I'll go wight back; but I was des sure you couldn't do wivout me," said Miriam.

Returning to her mother she announced in puzzled tones, "My Dewdwop doesn't want me. She has always wanted me till now, and I don't understand it."

"Well, don't mind it, Pet," said Prairie. "Dewdrop's hand is smarting, and perhaps she wants to have a little cry all by herself, to ease the pain. There comes papa, leading Chipmunk," looking from the window. "Get your cap and run and pat the pony's nose, and ask him if he'd like a dose of peppermint on a lump of sugar."

Miriam skipped away to lavish sympathy on the pony, as Piokee was in no mood to accept it.

"The Indian is cropping out in Dewdrop with a vengeance," said Aunt Abigail, heaping up the white-of-egg froth she was beating for the ice cream in a snowy pile, to see if it would stand alone. "It has always seemed as if she'd fling herself beneath the Car of Juggernaut for Miriam's sake, and now a freak has seized her not to let the child come near her. Then, too, I was watching Dewdrop like a hawk when Ebenezer spoke about the pony, and if she didn't plunge her hand into that scalding water purely on purpose, I'm mistaken."

"Why, Auntie, how impossible!" said Prairie in amazement. "Dear me! what has caused you to imagine that?"

"I've heard that Indians take a barbarous delight in torturing themselves to ease a guilty conscience — if they ever have a conscience — and perhaps there's something preying on her mind that is developing the mania in her. She is as silent as a sphinx this morning. Not a word escaped her in the midst of all the buzz about the back door being open and the antics of the shadow girl — as Sally so absurdly calls that horseback vanisher."

"But she is often silent, especially when you are here. I think she doesn't understand you, Auntie, and is half-afraid you are in earnest when you look so stern and make such startling speeches," said Prairie, with a placid smile.

"Well, goodness knows I aim to do my Christian duty, free of prejudice, to every human being, regardless of the color of the skin," replied Aunt Abigail, with somewhat less asperity. "But I have always looked upon the Indian as a riddle which the good Lord only, who created him for some mysterious purpose, has the key to. I'm afraid you will rue the day you ever took one of the race to pet and pamper. I predict you'll have a tug to manage Dewdrop after this. I wouldn't trust her too far with the care of Miriam."

"O, Auntie! you can't think how strange it seems to think of managing our gentle Dewdrop," Prairie said. "Why, she has seemed to grow up in her sweet still way without the slightest need of being managed. And with whom, pray, could we trust the precious baby if not with our devoted red-brown girlie who has always been completely wrapped up in the child?"

Aunt Abigail shook her head three times, but made no further answer.

The liniment was hidden in the farthest corner of the top shelf, and Piokee had been scanning label after label on the bottles standing guard about it Aunt Abigail's voice, distinct at all times, reached her where she stood upon the chair and pierced her like a two-edged sword. Prairie's softly spoken words in her defense she did not hear, and they would but have added to her misery had she heard them.

Yes, the Indian was cropping out in her — she knew that to be true; and though she felt that she would willingly lay down her life for Miriam, if need be, like Aunt Abigail she began to doubt if Mamma Prairie's precious baby could be safely trusted in her care.

Dropping from the chair she hastily replaced it in the dining-room, and went upstairs without the liniment. What matter if she played the violin with fingers tingling with torture as they touched

the strings? In being born an Indian she was doomed to pain and misery, and the sooner it began the sooner she would cease to strive against it.

"How is the pony?" Prairie asked, stepping to the door as John was leading Chipmunk past with Miriam on his back.

"His appetite is quite as good as ever, and I can't discover that he's ailing in the least," said John. "Strange, however, that he should have been in such a sweat. If it were not unlikely, I should think he had been ridden very fast this morning; but the stable door was locked as usual, and not a man about the place appears to have been out before daylight."

"Perhaps his halter wasn't fixed just right, or there was something else to fret him in the stall. Dewdrop will be glad to know he isn't sick," said Prairie, much relieved.

As John passed on and Prairie shut the door, Aunt Abigail took off her spectacles and polished them with care, then put them on again, absorbed in puzzled thought.

Brusque Aunt Abigail had little difficulty, as a rule, in managing her powers of speech, but as she looked at Prairie, briskly finishing the breakfast dishes, something made her hesitate to deal out further what was in her mind.

"I am afraid," began she, drawing near to Prairie, "that there is a grist of circumstantial evidence to

prove"— she paused abruptly. Not for all the world could she express her firm conviction that the child whom Prairie had so loved and trusted was the rider that had caused the mystery of the morning. What had called Piokee out so secretly at such a time surpassed Aunt Abigail's vaguest guess, but she would wait and watch, and for the present say no more about it.

"What is that?" asked Prairie, turning in some wonder at the sudden pause.

"That cream that Sally's skimming in the milk-room will turn sour before she gets it off," whisked aside Aunt Abigail. "To see her scud about, dodging here and there and nowhere, one would think she was a world-wide wonder in the way of turning off quick work. She is a bright and shining proof of the old saying, 'Grasp the world and catch a grain of sand.'"

"And the circumstantial evidence to prove that Sally's cream is souring is that she and Ebenezer are enjoying a confidential chat upon the milk-room steps," said Prairie merrily. "Those chats have been in progress ever since you first had Sally for a helper on the claim, some fourteen years ago. And has the cream been souring all that time? Patient Auntie and persistent Ebenezer!"

Sally's milk was skimmed, and she had started for the kitchen with the cream, when Ebenezer met her

on the way. Fleeing backward several paces, Sally gained a random foothold on the milk-room steps, and sinking down upon them, nursed her crock of cream with an abstracted air.

"Heered Mr. Bowers tellin' Mis' Bowers 'peared like Chipmunk had been racin'. Do you reckon that a shadder girl would ride a reel flesh an' blood hoss?" she said to Ebenezer, who pursued her to the steps. She had told him of the mystery before.

"Wa-al, I should say a sperrit girl would need a sperrit hoss ter go a-junketin' through the air an' vanishin' inter nothin', as you reckon this one did. But I don't take much stock in sperrits, nohow. Bone an' muscle girls air onaccountable enough fer me," with a reproachful look at Sally, "an' it wouldn't be surprisin' if I hedn't got no grit ter be a-chasin' after shadder girls."

"Yes, 'twould," contradicted Sally; "you'd chase a shadder girl as quick as anybuddy, if you reckoned you could ketch her."

"Wa-al," said Ebenezer, sighing hopelessly, "I mought say I've been chasin' somethin' of the sort fer fourteen year or more, an' I expect ter keep on ter my dyin' day, though 'tain't a bit o' use."

"Yes, 'tis — O, goodness me! what hev I said? No, 'tain't, no, 'tain't!" And Sally scampered to the kitchen, spilling cream at every bound.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOMESTEAD CLUB'S REUNION.

IN the middle of the afternoon, Uncle Kearn, Aunt Rose and Dr. Whistler alighted from the carriage on the sunny lawn.

"Your choice: sweetbrier rose, spring-beauty or chrysanthemum?" said Kearn, delivering his flower-like wife into Prairie's arms and capturing two huge bouquets Rose held in her hand.

"Oh! sweetbrier and spring-beauty both in one," was Prairie's laughing answer. "You dear pink and white rose, are you a day over sixteen?" holding Mrs. Kearn at arm's-length with wondering admiration.

"You dear middle-aged lady, are there crow's-feet at the corners of your eyes?" retorted Sweetbrier, inspecting her rosy sister-in-law with mirthful scrutiny.

"Well, this really is an interesting gathering," said John, appearing on the lawn and cordially

shaking hands all around. "The Homestead Club is having a reunion after fourteen years."

"With one new member," added Kearn, transferring Miriam from Dr. Whistler's shoulder to his own.

"Let's play we're all back again on the claim — just for one happy little minute," Prairie wistfully proposed.

"But wouldn't it be impossible to put Piokee to sleep in the new pig-trough you confiscated for her cradle? This little girl has grown tall," said Dr. Whistler, drawing Piokee to his side and measuring her height against his sleeve.

"Dear me, yes! our baby has outgrown her primitive cradle," said Prairie, smoothing Piokee's hair with a regretful little sigh. "And I see that our young Indian chief has forgotten to put on his splendid scarlet tunic, and his wampum belt and eagle-feathered cap," surveying, with a glance that also looked into the past, the lithe, straight doctor, faultlessly attired in black, with a red rose in his button-hole.

"But I've remembered the bow and arrow," said Dr. Whistler, and he took a handsome set of archery from the carriage, waiting on the driveway to shed the baggage tucked away beneath its ample seats. "To Mrs. Sparkling Eyes, in memory of Auld Lang Syne," bowing with respectful ceremony, and presenting it to Prairie as a wooden wedding gift.

"Oh! the pretty treasure," Prairie cried admiringly. "I shall place it in the curiosity corner with the other Indian relics. It is very like the bow we used to hang on the oak-tree near the claim-cabin, with the firm resolve, hands off — while we held a spelling bee below the tree. Don't you remember, Dr. Whistler, how we sat there on the ground with the blackbirds chattering overhead and the rabbits scudding all about us, and how hard it was to fix attention on the stupid book, when target shooting was so much more to our taste?"

Dr. Whistler gave a retrospective smile. "That is one of the memories that cling to us through life," said he. "I have that very book in which I learned the A B C's, with the little claim-girl for my teacher;" and he took a tattered, coverless primer from his pocket, viewing it as if it were a treasure of great value. "Now, then, shall we set up the target and review the scene of spelling-book *versus* bow and arrow, in real earnest?"

"Dear me! I should be completely worsted in the trial," Prairie laughingly replied. "I've scarcely fired an arrow since I was a girl of fourteen, but you have worked away at letters till you wouldn't be appalled to be confronted by a spelling-book in several languages."

"Not to speak of all the medical research by which you've gained the title of M. D.," said Lawyer Kearn.

"The hardest work of all was right here on the pages of this simple book," said Dr. Whistler, opening the primer musingly and turning its leaves with tender care.

"How did you feel when you were toiling over it? Do tell us," said Sweetbrier Rose with interest.

"Well, as nearly as I recollect, I felt that I must 'mind my teacher,' as the children say, and not disgrace myself too badly in her view, however great my agony to master A B C. Strange to say, I didn't care a whit for all the learning in creation till the little claim-girl thoroughly convinced me by her missionary zeal that she was deeply interested in my welfare. Her approval was the sugar coating to the pill of application, which I swallowed with a wry face and much savage grumbling. I suspect, too, that the tomahawk cookies that she used to bake for me did much toward awakening my dormant intellect," he added, with a smile that showed his strong white teeth. "Do you remember, Mrs. Sparkling Eyes, how they increased in size as I progressed in knowledge? The longer the word I spelled correctly, the longer the handle to the tomahawk and the more murderous the blade."

There was a hearty laugh all round at this delightful reminiscence of the learned physician's boyish struggles with the dog-eared spelling-book.

"Ah me! I fear I was a very inconsistent mis-

sionary," answered Prairie, as the merriment subsided; "I should have chosen a less warlike symbol than a tomahawk in which to put my 'sugar and spice and everything nice' for a wild Indian boy's reward of merit. It is a wonder that I didn't start you on the warpath, Dr. Whistler, instead of luring you into the peaceful paths of study."

Miriam had alighted from Kearn's shoulder to seize the bow with rapture, and her eagerness to speed an arrow could no longer be restrained.

"Please show me how to fire 'e pwetty shooter, Mr. Doctor," she implored.

"Well, wee yellow hair," said Dr. Whistler, dropping on one knee beside her, "will you aim your arrow at the sun, or at a bird upon the wing?"

"I fink I'll aim at my dear papa," was her safe conclusion. "I mustn't hit him for 'e world, but I must miss him near enough to make him jump."

John hid behind a tree in mock alarm, and Miriam, wild with glee, let fly the arrow. It missed the tree by several yards, but papa jumped into the air to carry out the programme, and executed several frantic leaps thereafter, as if the arrow still pursued him. Miriam screamed with laughter, enjoying the archery sport as hugely as her mother used to when she was the little claim-girl.

After Miriam was satisfied, the bow and arrow went the rounds, and all except Piokee tried their

skill in firing at the target. She did not touch the bow, but, standing somewhat separate from the rest, watched the sport with an abstracted gaze that Dr. Whistler did not fail to notice.

The senior member of the Homestead Club, Grandpapa Wilde, had now come over from his farm to welcome Kearn and Rose and Dr. Whistler, and the meeting on the lawn adjourned.

On their way toward the house, Dr. Whistler dropped behind the rest and waited for Piokee, coming slowly up the walk alone.

"Piokee used to like the bow and arrow. Can it be she has lost interest in the sport?" he asked with some surprise, falling into step beside her.

"Yes, my chief," she answered listlessly. "I think I shall never care for any kind of sport again."

Piokee had a quaint, respectful way of calling Dr. Whistler "my chief." This Prairie had taken care to teach her just as soon as she was old enough to lisp the words. It was in recognition of the tribal title that had vanished with the scattering of his father's band.

No sooner had Piokee made this answer than she wished she could recall it, for Dr. Whistler stopped abruptly and, wheeling round before her on the walk, looked at her with a professional air, saying very gravely:

"I think you need some liver powders, or per-

haps a tonic for your nerves. It is something new for you to be low-spirited."

"O, no, indeed! There's not the slightest need of any medicine," replied Piokee, startled by his searching gaze that seemed to look into her mind as if to read the cause of her disquietude. "I'll play all sorts of games and exercise all day, if you won't go to doctoring me," she promised, with a frantic effort to shake off the mopes.

"I must inquire of Mamma Prairie about the books and music," he went on, regardless of her protest. "She is too wise to let you overtax yourself with study, under her tuition, if she knows it; but I am inclined to think you need a long vacation."

Piokee shuddered in heart, thinking of the long vacation whose beginning might be near. There rose before her mind a picture of the Indian village she had flitted through while on a wondering, half-frightened visit to her people, years before, and she saw herself as one of its inhabitants: the men and boys strolling listlessly about, or lolling in the sun, the girls and women working stolidly, or chattering empty tattle, all without one bright inspiring thought of books or the society of chosen friends.

Surely there could be no peaceful study hours, no self-improvement in the midst of such surroundings, even if the precious books and violin went with her when the loved teachers were forsaken.

The quick dissolving vision vanished in mid-air, and left her standing on the sunny lawn with Dr. Whistler.

"Oh! please don't speak to Mamma Prairie; it would worry her," she begged, more and more dismayed that she had given Dr. Whistler a hint of her distress. "I'm going very slow in everything; Cæsar is only at war with the Belgians in Latin, and Cleopatra has just been bitten by the asp in history. I'm scanning the Lady of the Lake in English poetry, and am stuck fast not half-way through the algebra. I'm in the third position on the violin, and have been practicing a piece I am to play to-night the best I can."

"That is not so bad as I expected," answered Dr. Whistler, with a smile, "unless the quagmire in the algebra has caused too great a mental strain. I feared that you were too ambitious to be ready for the Eastern school, and were taking long lessons in too many books. The school must wait till you can enter it without taxation. You will need a vigorous mind and perfect health to fit you to become a missionary to our people. That is your chosen life-work, is it not?"

She was saved from answering, for "Little Annie Rooney" burst upon the ear in airy strains just then, and Ebenezer hurried from the stable, taking long strides toward the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHARIOT.

"IT'S the Tan-an'-freckle Soap-an'-di'mon' chariot, that's travelin' through the country; Sally's got my money under lock an' key," was the information Ebenezer flung out in passing.

There now appeared in sight a gayly decorated but extremely dusty chariot, whose pair of fagged-out horses plucked up sudden energy in coming through the gate, bearing down on the tenant house like capering colts, and rattling the chariot like a charge of musketry. The musicians, an accordion girl and banjo boy, bounced upon their throne, clutched the pillars to the canopy for a support, and "Little Annie Rooney," with a few expiring squeaks, was choked off in the middle of the chorus.

It chanced to be a caucus day throughout the county, and the chariot was decked with a bewildering array of stars and stripes that charmed the patriotic eyes of quite a cavalcade of farmers' boys,

who had been falling into line behind it all along the way.

There was an instant ripple of excitement on the ranch, for a peddler's wagon of such smart pretensions was a novel sight in this locality. Stout Mrs. Biddle waddled out to meet the show with flurried wonder, thither Ebenezer escorted Sally, and the hired men, just home from voting at the caucus, gathered round it.

"Oh! please take me over to 'e pwetty circus, Dewdwop — quick! quick!" cried Miriam, dancing down the steps of the piazza.

"Well, run along, but keep to one side, and be careful not to let the elephant toss you up," laughed John.

When Piokee reached the spot with Miriam, the peddler was setting forth the merits of the Tan-and-freckle Soap.

"The Tan-an'-freckle Soap, ladies an' gentlemen, is the wonder of the age. Why, gentlemen, if I was in the habit of exaggeratin' I might say 'twould take the spots off of a bird's-eye maple door, sayin' nothin' of the blemishes on the sun an' wind-kissed faces of yer most admired young lady friends with otherwise beautyous complexions."

Here Ebenezer glanced at Sally, who tossed her head and turned away to hide a conscious blush; and the accordion girl, whose thickly spattered

freckles were so many wondering little "o's" exclaiming at the peddler for daring to impart such merit to the soap, fixed her twinkling eyes on Piokee and smothered an uprising giggle.

"Only twenty-five cents a cake, an' a prize package with a piece of rare Eureky di'mon' jewelry, throwed in! Wake up, gentlemen, an' buy a present for yer lady friends. If yer so unfortunate that you hain't got no lady friends, you can use the soap to keep yer heads an' whiskers thick and shiny."

The soap found ready sale, notwithstanding the accordion girl's complexion, for the "diamond jewelry" was a tempting bait that allured many nibblers.

"We'll give ye some more soul-stirrin' music perresently," remarked the peddler, while dealing out the soap. "You must excuse the absence of a fiddle; I'm on the lookout fer a girl-performer to jine our or-ches'try an' be comp'ny fer my daughter. These yer musicians air my son an' daughter, ladies an' gentlemen. We're a trav'lin' fambly, as it ware."

"Ye oughter hear Miss Dewdrop play the fiddle," said Ebenezer, pointing to Piokee with the silver dollar he was handing up for four cakes of soap and the included prize packages.

The peddler turned his glance on Piokee with an instant eye to business.

"Look here," said he, with animation, seeing that she was an Indian girl. "I'll offer you a good big salary to travel South with us dressed up in Injun toggery as a fiddlin' ghost dancer."

"Oh!" said she, "I couldn't be a ghost dancer, for I don't believe in the Indian Messiah. But I could wear an Indian costume and play the violin," thinking for an instant that in this way she might earn enough to pay her father another ransom. "Though of course I couldn't go — they would never let me — Mamma Prairie and the rest," she immediately bethought herself.

"No, no!" cried Miriam in alarm. "My Dew-dwop couldn't go off wiv 'e circus — no indeed."

"Wa-al, don't be too sartin," said the peddler. "We're goin' on beyond, an' shall be back in somethin' like two weeks. You can talk with them that has the say so, an' may be we can strike a bargain. But it must be fair an' square. I don't incourage no e-lopements like some travelin' charioteers," and he again became absorbed in the disposal of his wares.

Slipping down from her position on the dry-goods box that formed the throne, the accordion girl dropped into a vacant niche below the dashboard, where she drew Piokee to her by a telegram from her twinkling eyes, while the soap was being dealt out from the rear.

"Don't you go a single step. It's horrid," whispered she, bending over till the tassel of her red cap brushed Piokee's head. "The customers would stare at you, an' you would have to eat cold beans an' camp out like a gypsy, when we couldn't strike a town in time. Then, too, Sammy sometimes has a spell, right while he's playin' the banjo, an' leaps clear out of the chariot, an' scares the customers, an' spoils the trade."

"Poor boy! does he have fits?" Piokee asked, with a pitying look at the youth upon the throne, who leaned his elbows on his banjo in an absent-minded way, and seemed to search the firmament with his eyes.

"Only trances. He's in first-rate health," responded the accordion girl. "Nothin' ails him but his second sight. He's a mind reader — Sammy is. Some folks thinks he makes it all, but if anything was worryin' you distracted, I reckon he could tell exactly what it was by lookin' at you."

"Oh! don't let him — how dreadful!" said Piokee, turning her back on the hawk-eyed banjo boy, in conscious dread that he might ferret out her secret.

"No danger now; Sammy can't do anything unless he has a spell," the accordion girl composedly assured her. "He goes by fits an' starts, you see. Pa says if he could be depended on, there'd be a

fortune in that second sight of hisn. Well, I like your looks, and you'd be company for me, but pa is apt to make big promises he can't carry out. If he should invest in you, an' pay you, 'twould eat up all the profits an' there'd be nothin' to send home to ma an' the other six children, down in Texas. If he didn't pay you, pins an' needles would be stickin' me to think how you was bein' cheated."

"Please don't let 'e music girl whisper in your ear," begged Miriam, clinging to Piokee's dress in wonder at the stifled interview. "Is she coaxing you to go away wiv her?" wide-eyed with terror at the thought. "Oh! I must take my Dewdwop home. I'm afwaid to twust her wiv vis kind of circus," and she bore Piokee off in trembling haste, while the accordion girl, with a farewell nod, remounted the throne.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WOODEN WEDDING.

VERY early in the evening, before the wedding guests began to gather, Piokee came downstairs with restless feet to hie away into her favorite nook in a wing beyond the parlors, where were kept the books, some mineral cabinets, and a store of Indian curiosities.

Piokee wore a gown of yellow silk, with ribbons of the same bright color fluttering down the skirt, from beneath a silver girdle round her waist. There were coils of silver on her arms, and several strands of silver beads around her neck. A frost-work arrow pierced her braided hair, and there were filigree buckles on the dainty slippers on her slender feet. These rather barbaric but becoming ornaments were a gift from Dr. Whistler, who liked to see his dusky little friend as brilliantly attired as came within the bounds of civilized taste.

"Hum!" observed Aunt Abigail, who was in the

dining-room with Prairie, and saw Piokee as she flitted downstairs; "a brown alpaca would have been more suitable for this occasion. I wonder, Prairie, that you'll gratify a craving for such savage finery. You should make an effort to subdue the Indian in Dewdrop; though of course that is as fixed as the eternal hills, never to be blotted out."

"O, Auntie! don't," begged Prairie softly. "She looks so pretty — like a bright-winged bird. I hope she didn't hear you; it would spoil her pleasure in the lovely costume."

Pursued by the penetrating voice, that all too surely pierced her heart, Piokee fled across the empty back parlor to the curiosity room, and drew the drapery across the doorway with a sweeping rush, as if to shut the whole world from her view.

She stopped before a mirror hung between two cabinets, and viewed herself from head to foot. She felt as if she had awakened from a life-long dream to find that she was not herself, but some one else whom she abhorred. And there was her rebellious image looking at her from the glass, haughtily erect, with a defiant frown beneath the straight black bangs, with curling lips and burning, coal-black eyes.

"Oh! you hateful, hateful thing! You are an Indian, and I despise you," she ejaculated in a vehement undertone. "It doesn't make one bit of dif-



"OH! YOU HATEFUL, HATEFUL THING!" SHE EJACULATED.

ference if you have been loved, and taught, and prayed for all your life, just as if you were the dearest white girl; you're a savage Indian, all the same. Why, don't you know an Indian's nature is as fixed as the eternal hills, and you must be sly, and treacherous, and selfish, and revengeful, however hard you twist and turn and try to run away from it? Oh! you can't escape the doom of all your race, and you needn't look so fierce, as if you'd like to jump right out of there and kill me on the spot for saying so. If you were to die for it you couldn't be true to Mamma Prairie, nor loyal to your own people; and if you would deceive the dearest, sweetest friend that ever took a starving baby to her heart, and hate your own flesh and blood, what wouldn't you do, I wonder? You pretend to fairly worship darling little Miriam, but I shouldn't be at all surprised if you'd just love to torture her — yes — torture — Miriam! And worst of all, you look as if you didn't care one bit if you are made of stone, you hard, hard Indian."

Piokee paused for breath, still viewing her rebellious image with a merciless gaze.

Another figure, stepping from a curtained alcove, suddenly appeared beside hers in the mirror. It was Dr. Whistler, who had been visiting the curiosity corner, and adding to it some new relics.

He stood quite still awhile, surveying the now

startled little image in the yellow gown with fluttering ribbons in a half-amused, half-puzzled way.

"Piokee does quite well at amateur theatricals," he presently remarked. "I should say, that her original drama is entitled 'The Soliloquy of the Indian's Bad Heart.'"

"Oh! did you hear it all?" said she, shrinking hastily aside and drawing her reflection from the mirror. "No; I wasn't practicing theatricals," she faltered, the red blood surging over her dusky face. "I meant it, every word. I really had the bad heart when I talked that way."

Dr. Whistler knit his brows as if confronted by a problem he was at a loss to answer.

"So that is the cause of the low spirits that I fancied called for liver powders and a tonic for the nerves. Poor little girl!" he took Piokee's hand in a protecting way; "what cruel blow has fallen on your bright young life to teach you what I learned so long ago, that it is no happy fate to be an Indian?"

She could not carry her confession further, and tell him all that had transpired within the last two days, and he was left to wonder at the change in her.

"I see," observed he as she did not speak, but stood with downcast eyes, "that Piokee's soul is in revolt against the poor Indian. She has joined

hands with the white man, and would hunt him down and drive him from the face of the earth."

"Yes," she owned, almost in a whisper; "you will think me dreadfully disloyal to our race, my chief, and I used to think I was so proud to be an Indian; but I wish, oh! I wish so much that I were a white girl. I'm ashamed to be an Indian," she burst out impetuously, thinking of the terrible father, with the ghastly row of dangling dolls about his scalp-lock.

"Nevertheless, the Indian is a fixed fact, and you will have to make the best of it," said Dr. Whistler very gravely, almost sternly. After a little pause he said, more gently:

"It is one of life's hard questions we must bravely face, Piokee, why you and I are destined to belong to that unfortunate race whom all except a few good men and women, called humanitarians, regard as utterly incurable vagabonds. And worst of all is this mysterious Indian nature, which requires harder fighting than the most merciless white man that has ever been our foe. You have confessed to me, Piokee, that you are ashamed to be an Indian, and I will return the confidence by saying that I am at heart as great a vagabond as any of those reckless scamps who are to-night engaging in the ghost dance in Dakota."

"What, you, my chief?" exclaimed Piokee, look-

ing in amazement at the civilized doctor, standing victoriously erect, but smiling gloomily, as if reviewing a doubtful conquest. "I didn't think you ever wanted, for a single half-instant, to be like those dreadful men."

"I don't want to, and, God helping me, I never will be," was his solemn answer; "but I sometimes feel I must. Like you and your reflection in the mirror you were so emphatically denouncing, there are two of me. My counterpart is a Black Hawk Indian" —

"O, Dewdrop! here you are," cried Floy, who swept aside the drapery at the door, and burst into the room, a radiant vision in pale blue.

She stopped with some embarrassment on seeing Dr. Whistler, whom she had never met. She had fancied she should stand somewhat in awe of this peculiar combination of a "real live Indian" and a civilized doctor.

Finding him a grave but cordial gentleman, whose smile was most attractive, and whose "eagle eyes," as she had pictured them, were stern or gentle as the case demanded, she was soon at ease and chatting merrily away with him.

"My cousin Ellery is here, all on tiptoe to be introduced to you," she presently announced. "And my sister Priscilla wants to hear you talk. She says she means to keep within a listening distance of you

all the evening; but, dear me! I shouldn't have told you that," and Floy blushed brightly. "Please don't feel annoyed if we buzz around you asking ever so many curious questions. Of course we shall know better, but I'm afraid we just can't help it, we are all so interested in the Indian problem. Later in the evening, when we are all together, we'd like to hear about that Black Hawk Indian you were speaking of when I came in — your partner, I think you called him," was her startling request.

"You would not care to know him," Dr. Whistler said evasively. "I avoid him all I can, but owing to our peculiar relations I am sometimes forced to meet him face to face."

And with an odd smile, that increased Floy's interest to hear about the Black Hawk Indian, he dismissed the subject, and escorted the girls to the parlors, where the company were now gathering.

They were pleasant, well-dressed people from the neighboring farms and ranches and the little town a few miles distant. Priscilla, Floy and Ellery were the only young guests, as the party was for older ones. Priscilla was a slender, brown-haired girl, whose dress of silver gray well became her dove-like face.

In joining the company, Piokee strove hard to forget her trouble for the evening, and was as calm as usual, and apparently as cheerful.

The bouquet of feathers audaciously peeped from beneath the lapel of Ellery's dress coat, and tucked into a fold of Piokee's gown, beneath her girdle, was the college badge; but there appeared to be no mutual recognition as the two were introduced.

Ellery was vastly more at ease with civilized Piokee than he had been with the wild young squaw, and betrayed no curiosity when face to face with this new, interesting type of Indian girl Prairie had developed from the vagabond race.

When Piokee played the violin, drawing out of it the sweet old-time strains of "The Blue Juniata," Ellery turned her music in the most attentive manner, and watched her graceful bowing with well-bred admiration, but without surprise.

At last he said, "I met Bright Alfarata yesterday."

"Did you, really? How could she leave the Blue Juniata?" said Piokee, with a gleam of mischief.

"The Government has broken another treaty, and driven her away," said Ellery, with responsive mischief. "Never more will she paddle her 'light canoe adown the rapid river.' She has come West to settle on a new reservation."

> "'Loose were her jetty locks,
> In wavy tresses flowing,'

when I was introduced to her on Uncle Fred's piazza. She wears them in a braid to-night, and her wild-

wood costume is exchanged for a bewildering evening dress; but I know her by her unmistakable self-poise and her Beacon Street bow. That was a merciless joke you perpetrated yesterday, Miss Dewdrop, on a trusting Freshman, pining for a glimpse of the untutored savage."

"Do forgive me, and swapee back again," begged Piokee, holding out the charm.

"Yes, and no," was Ellery's laughing answer. "I will try to cultivate a forgiving spirit, but it was a fair trade, and I shall insist on keeping my bouquet. Priscilla has a Houdan rooster wearing feathers very much like mine, but for all that I consider him a curious bird," amiably acknowledging the playful fraud of which he was the victim.

Floy came back to find the charm attached to Piokee's necklace, and the two ensconced in the bay window, engaged in interesting conversation.

"Oh! then he did know you all the time; you have settled scores," said she, taking in the situation at a glance. "Did you suspect before you came here, Ellery, that the wild young squaw was Priscilla's pet violinist she had told you so much about?"

"Well," said Ellery, "in pondering on the subject, I could but wonder if the rage for russet shoes, such as I observed Bright Alfarata wore, had struck the reservation, and if a barber trimmed the bangs of all the wild young squaws. Then the Houdan

rooster's plumage, and my singular uneasiness beneath Bright Alfarata's civilized gaze, which she could not disguise, also helped enlighten me."

"I see you're learning something more about the Indian problem every day," laughed Floy. "Now, then, Dr. Whistler is in the curiosity room, talking with Priscilla all alone, and if we make a raid on him, I'm sure we can persuade him to tell us about that Black Hawk Indian."

"Oh! don't ask him," said Piokee, greatly startled. "He would be displeased, and you can't imagine how he'd frighten you if he looked stern."

"No; I can't imagine Dr. Whistler as a frightful monster," answered Floy composedly. "But why should he look stern about the Black Hawk Indian?" opening her eyes with wonder.

"Because," said Piokee, hesitating whether she should say it, but intent on stopping Floy at all events, "it is the other side of himself."

Floy looked puzzled for an instant; then she burst into a merry little peal of laughter.

"Well, the right side is so splendid the wrong side must be noble, too," she said. "I mean to find out if he's like a three-ply carpet — good to turn, when one gets tired of the same thing over and over." And away she flew.

Piokee and Ellery remained in the bay window. Presently Floy came back triumphant.

"Come, I've won him over," she announced.

They found Priscilla looking shocked at Floy's audacity in dragging the Black Hawk Indian from his ambuscade, but Dr. Whistler looked simply amused, and did not seem so averse to humoring Floy as Piokee had expected.

"I warn you, Miss Floy," said he, "that you will recoil in horror from the Black Hawk Indian; but since you have a strong desire to meet him, it may be the surest way to cure you of your interest in the revengeful fellow by bringing him before you for one minute."

CHAPTER X.

THE BLACK HAWK INDIAN.

"MY counterpart's first memory," began Dr. Whistler, "is of his mother's lullaby, soothing him to sleep with a recital of the brave deeds of his ancestor, the great chief Black Hawk.

"'Go to sleep, my boy,' ran the lullaby, 'your great forefather was a mighty warrior. He told his young men that the Indian's war-path is a long way through a thick wood, where the trees are like the stars in number — go to sleep, my boy. On every tree is marked a picture of a white man's bad deed to the Indian. For every wrong the Indian must take a white man's scalp — go to sleep, my boy. When there are not men enough to pay the debt, the pale-faced women must be seized as captives, and the frightened children torn from mother's arms — go to sleep, my boy.

"'Go to sleep, my boy — your great forefather and his braves no longer tread the war-path. Their

sons and grandsons have been conquered by the white man, who has slain the deer and buffalo, and robbed the Indian of his hunting grounds — go to sleep, my boy. Your father is no longer chief. His head is bowed with shame that you, his strong young son, will have no band to rule, and will be powerless to avenge the wrongs that you have suffered from the white man — go to sleep, my boy.'

"Thus ran the lullaby, on and on, until the boy fell asleep to dream of the glories of the war-path, and of wreaking vengeance on the red man's foe.

"When he was still a little lad he saw his people driven from their lands in Kansas, as they had been driven from another reservation across the Mississippi years before. The little Black Hawk Indian staid behind with his rebellious father, who clung to the old reservation, refusing support from the Government, and sold a herd of ponies to buy a portion of the land his people had relinquished by a treaty.

"The lad retained a bitter memory of the blue-coated soldiers with their bristling bayonets, who formed a guard to move the quelled, dejected remnant of a once proud tribe into another little corner of the universe which the white man had not yet begun to covet.

"As the lad grew older he panted to become a warrior, and deplored the lack of spirit in his tribe that made them peaceable while Northern Indians

were on the war-path, struggling to match with cunning cruelty the cool, relentless discipline of the Government soldier.

"As a man, he heartily admires the pluck and daring of those Modoc braves who fought like tigers in the Lava Beds of Oregon, and glories in the fortitude of the Nez Perces, who could still battle for a hopeless victory in the howling wind and driving snow at Bear Paw Mountain, and does not condemn the treachery of the outraged Sioux, who lured Custer and his slender band into their death trap at the Little Big Horn.

"When he hears of the Indian Messiah, who, his people wildly hope, is coming to relieve their sufferings, redress their wrongs, sweep the white man from existence and bring back the deer and buffalo to the old hunting grounds, his heart exults, and in his dreams he joins the orgies of the ghost dancers, whets his scalping knife, and holds himself in readiness to spring to arms on instant warning to defend the last forlorn hope of his dying race."

As Dr. Whistler's speech increased in vehemence, his face grew black with vengeance, and his eyes were quite appalling in their sternness.

Unconsciously, Ellery moved a step back, and Floy and Piokee held their breath, and nestled close together with their arms around each other.

The speaker paused a minute, wrapped in thought.

"O, Dr. Whistler! you frighten us," Priscilla murmured, with a scared look in her gentle eyes.

The spell was broken in an instant, and a strong, sweet smile dispelled the gloom of Dr. Whistler's face.

"I gave you fair warning," reminded he, "that you would better not meet this revengeful fellow. He is the inevitable Indian, who, like Banquo's ghost, 'will not down at my command.'"

"But he is rather splendid, after all, if he is revengeful," said Floy romantically, "and I wouldn't quite put an end to him, poor fellow."

"Now let's hear from the other man," said Ellery. "Dr. Whistler, from your view as an educated Indian, what shall we do with the Nation's Wards?"

"In the first place, try to understand that they are not wild beasts, needing only to be fed with raw meat and kept in cages, very carefully barred, lest they break loose and create a panic. Consider that the Indian is a human being, with a soul in his peculiar make-up, that may be found with patient search. Adopting this opinion, try the humanitarian system; treat him fairly; even take him by the hand and surprise him with a dose of brotherly love, as our Lord has commanded us to love all men."

"But," said Ellery, "the exterminators would declare the Indian would scalp you with one hand,

while you were grasping the other in brotherly love."

"Well," said Dr. Whistler, "I don't deny that the experiment is dangerous in some degree. The old King Philip Indian still lives, and it will take a century of brotherly love to cure him of his revengeful instincts. But that the experiment can be successfully made, has been proven by the brave missionaries, who have gone to work with our most savage Indians. There are tender girls among these teachers, who have left luxurious homes to brave the dangers of the frontier, and who stand as smiling messengers of peace and goodwill in the very war-path of the Messiah-crazed ghost dancers of the North. It is a rare atonement for the wrongs the Indian has suffered from the white man, and I venture the opinion that the wildest of those reckless savages is not wholly insensible to the sacrifice."

Piokee caught her breath, and drew away from Floy. The missionary girls had made the sacrifice for an alien race; she could not make it for her own. Their hearts had reached out to strangers; hers had turned against her own flesh and blood. But the conditions were far different. They could live in their own way, even though surrounded by the Indians; but how could she help sinking to the level of her people, if her lot were cast with theirs? And then, the missionary girls were not so young as

she. Years hence she, too, would go and work in her appointed way.

"The education of the children seems to be the only hope," said Ellery.

"Yes," said Dr. Whistler; "if the children can be kept from growing up in ignorance and idleness, when all the older ones have passed away no doubt the Indians will be peaceable and useful citizens of the United States."

"If the babies could only all be adopted by white people, just as Dewdrop was, the question would be settled very soon," said Floy. "If the Government must rob the Indians of something, why not leave their land and take their babies? They could be scattered round by lot, and every family of good standing, and enough means to support it, should be liable to draw a baby. When the children were too old and well brought up to ever grow uncivilized, they might go back to their people and begin a big reformation."

"But the going back would be too dreadful," said Priscilla. "And then their foster parents wouldn't give them up, if they were in the least like Dewdrop," slipping a fond arm round her pupil, little dreaming of the conflict in Piokee's heart.

"The going back of an Indian student is like walking through a fiery furnace," said Dr. Whistler, sadly remembering his own experience. "That is

why, as far as possible, the children should be taught at day schools on the reservation, or at the agency schools. Thus they will not be wholly weaned from home, and may shed the influence of their work upon their parents."

"But Dewdrop says you have a young step-brother, Naopope, who is at a white boys' school, and never comes back to the reservation, even at vacation time," said Floy, in something of a wonder why the doctor did not practice what he preached, and try his theory of home education on the brother.

"Nao's case is one of the impossibilities," he answered, while a slight shade crossed his face. "He is too fond of reservation life, and I have hoped to cure him, in a measure, by these years of absence."

He did not pursue the subject, and Floy dropped it, perceiving that he did not care to dwell on it.

"But if there is any other way, must they all go back, however much they dread it?" asked Piokee, speaking for the first time, with trembling lips.

"They must if they have parents," was the iron-clad reply. "Their mission is to work right there in the tepee or hut, and though a host of them be sacrificed, it is the only hope of bettering the forlorn condition of our race. The education of the children will be all in vain, if it robs them of their fortitude to share their parents' lot, whatever that may be."

Her piteous appealing look went by unmarked, for Sally now came scudding in, a shining messenger from Ebenezer's gift of soap and "diamonds," to call the little party to refreshments in the dining-room.

The guests departed at a seasonable hour; Dr. Whistler last of all. He wished to take the east-bound train at dawn, and borrowing a horse of Mr. Bowers, rode into town that night.

"Did you really mean that there is no escape?" pursued Piokee, drawing him aside while the few remaining guests were taking leave. "Need they all go back — every one?"

"You needn't," answered Dr. Whistler, smiling down at her uplifted, anxious face. "You are a rare exception to our race, in being a truly fortunate Indian girl, Piokee. You can rest in happy ease with Mamma Prairie for the present, since there are no family ties drawing you to the tepee or hut."

"But if there were," persisted she; "if there were a little brother and sister, growing up in the old wild way, while I was learning more and more of the beautiful new life, and going through the Eastern school — could they wait whole years for me to come to them?"

"Well, no," replied he, speaking seriously, though with a spark of laughter in his eyes; "if you must

prepare your conscience for an unnecessary sacrifice, Piokee, I should say that the imaginary little brother and sister would need prompt attention; that you should fly to them in haste, lest they become too set in the old wild way to ever be tamed."

Blind Dr. Whistler! Where was his usual discernment, that he did not see the step he was advising her to take?

She asked no further questions; the wise strong friend had said that she must go, and she rebelled no longer.

There were days of silent waiting, while she kept about her work and lessons just the same as ever, petted Miriam in her still, soft way, and watched for opportunities to wait with loving care on Mamma Prairie, and Aunt Rose whom Uncle Kearn had left to make a few weeks' visit at the ranch.

Dr. Whistler had advised more exercise, hence Piokee could ride out on Chipmunk every day, watching for the signal without awakening wonder.

Too soon she saw the broken bough, and made her hasty preparations for the flight.

A few articles of clothing, warm and strong of texture, her little workbox and a package of her precious books were rolled up in a bundle, then the doll and picture-book for Nanno — relics of her own happy childhood — were laid beside the violin within the case, to which she strapped the bundle.

In another roll were two Navajo blankets Dr. Whistler had sent her as an Indian treasure. They were of the softest, brightest colors, and were woven with great skill and durability. She and Miriam had been fond of playing Indian with these blankets, and had often stretched them on a frame of poles on the lawn, for a tepee of tiny size, but striking elegance. In this they had encamped like gleeful gypsies, with delicious messes simmering in a little porcelain kettle hanging from crotched poles above a fire outside the tent.

With heroic fortitude Piokee had played Indian with Miriam on this last sorrowful afternoon, when she returned from riding to the wood. Then she had borne the blankets to her room, and bound them with a shawl strap, ready for the flitting when the ranch was wrapped in sleep.

"Dear little room, you are so sweet and white, and you have been my very own so long — so long," she moaned in heart, sinking on her knees beside the bed, to pray that she might be forgiven for stealing forth like a thief at night from those to whom she owed so much.

Then she crept out into the darkness, leaving the little white room still and empty.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE MORNING.

"DEAR, dear!" groaned Ebenezer, when the flight had been discovered in the morning. "It's all because I told the peddler that Dewdrop was a fiddler. 'Tis a perfeck wonder that I hain't been shet up in an idjut asylum long ago."

"No, 'tain't," soothed Sally, deluging the tablecloth with coffee she was pouring while she looked askance to keep from dropping tears into his cup. "Don't take on so, Eben; 'tain't ev'rybuddy that kin hev the best o' sense, an' ef you ain't sharpened on both edges you ain't quite as dull as some poor tools."

This compliment, the first that Sally had bestowed on Ebenezer in the fourteen years of their acquaintance, would have given him great joy, had not the honest fellow been so staggered by the grief that filled the house.

When Piokee did not come to breakfast, Miriam

was sent to call her, and came back reporting that she was not in her room.

"I spect she's had an invitation out to bweakfast," was the tot's conclusion; "and has taken her violin to make some music for her fwends. Her bed is all made up nice, and evwy fing is spick-an'-span."

And at that moment Ebenezer sent in word by Sally that Chipmunk was not in his stall.

Prairie wonderingly arose and went upstairs. She was gone so long that Aunt Sweetbrier followed her, with Miriam by the hand.

"What is it, dear?" asked Rose, alarmed at finding Prairie sitting in the little white room with a stricken face.

"I don't know," said Prairie, in a far-off voice. "It is so very strange. Some of her clothes and things are missing. O, Sweetbrier! she must have gone away — to stay."

"Oh! oh! 'e music girl was whispering in her ear, and now my Dewdwop's gone off wiv 'e circus," Miriam cried, remembering the peddler's offer to Piokee to engage her as a violinist. And she threw herself face down upon the snowy bed Piokee's careful hands had left in trim array, and broke into a sorrowful wail.

A little later, the remorseful Ebenezer, who accused himself of having brought about the whole calamity, was hurrying down his breakfast in the

kitchen, to start with Mr. Bowers to pursue the peddler. The latter had passed through the neighborhood again within a day or two, and it was supposed Piokee had been lured from home to join his orchestra.

"Here, don't slight the buckwheats, if you be in sech a rush; an' help yerself to pickles," flustered Sally. She had managed to direct the flow of coffee into Ebenezer's cup, and was now on the bound toward the table from the stove with a bunch of pancakes pinioned on a fork.

"No pickles, thank ye," he dejectedly declined. "I'm in enough of a pickle now, lettin' cowcumpers teetotally alone."

"Wa-al, then, hev some scrambled egg an' maple syrup, an' chirk up," she urged, peppering his second cup of coffee and sugaring his egg, to help along the rush. "'Tain't a-goin' ter kill Dewdrop to be fiddlin' round the country in that scrumptious star-spangled chariot a day or two; no, 'tain't. 'Tis a picnic that most any girl would jump at, 'specially an out an' out gypsy, sech as her."

"But Dewdrop ain't the kind o' girl ter jump at picnics, and that's what makes it so tremenjous strange," said Ebenezer, swallowing his peppered coffee with distracted gulps.

"Little foster-sister, you and Mamma Prairie did your very best. If you have failed with Dewdrop

after all your care, how can there be the slightest hope for any of her race?" said John, taking Miriam in his arms to comfort her before he left home on his fruitless search.

"But it cannot be that we have failed," trusted Prairie, while she mourned. "I was so sure of Dewdrop, John, I used to smile securely and say, 'O, yes! why not?' when people doubtingly inquired if our red-brown girlie was contented in her civilized home, and if she was truthful and sweet-tempered, quick to learn, nice in her ways, and fond of books and work. All this our little Indian maid must be, however white girls miss perfection, because the world was looking on, expecting me to fail in my experiment with a daughter of the outcast race. My little loving Dewdrop! Why did she wish to leave us?"

"Why, because she is a born barbarian," said Aunt Abigail, coming in with Prairie's father. The tidings of Piokee's flight had burst upon them at the breakfast-table through a herder from the ranch, and they had dropped their knives and forks to hasten over. "'Tisn't to be wondered at one jot or tittle, and the child herself is not to blame for wanting to become a wandering minstrel, if she has joined the peddler's orchestra. What else can be expected of the offspring of a race that has been gadding back and forth from Dan to Beersheba ever since the

family of Noah were let out of the ark? An Indian would rather live on pounded acorns and be free to roam the universe, than eat plum pudding from a china saucer as a prisoner within four walls. I hope she took her overshoes and winter flannels, and some salve and liniment in case of accident. It stands to reason she didn't take a trunk, if she stole off horseback in the night."

"There seems to be the deepest mystery about the whole affair," said Prairie's father. "I have looked on Dewdrop as a model girl in all respects, my daughter, and have thought your marked success with her a singular triumph over race and antecedents. Has she shown in any way of late that she was growing tired of her quiet life?"

"I have thought, within the last two weeks, that she seemed a little restless," answered Prairie; "but I didn't once think she was tired of home. Only yesterday she came and stole her arms about my neck, and said it was the sweetest home in all the world, and asked me if I truly loved my red-brown girlie. Then she went out riding, and came back so still and strange I thought she must be ill."

"Meddlesome old maids don't need a spyglass to discern a mountain from a molehill," said Aunt Abigail, shooing down the kitten that was crawling up her back, and straightening her spectacles to hide her agitation; "I was sure there was something

wrong, and if this family hadn't been as blind as a whole nest of bats, you might have set a watch upon the child and saved the whole calamity."

Aunt Sweetbrier, who had gone upstairs directly after breakfast, now came back with a slip of paper in her hand.

"Here, dear," she said to Prairie, "is a little note we overlooked. I found it pinned to her pillow, on the under side."

Prairie seized it eagerly, and with a tremor in her voice read the parting message, written in a clear, round, girlish hand:

"'*The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.*'"

There was silence in the room. Then the old secure smile came back to Prairie's face.

"Dear child! I'm glad I haven't had a doubting thought. There's something we can't understand; but the Lord, who will watch between my poor little wanderer and me, knows all about it, and we shall know in time."

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE PECAN CAMP.

THE Navajo blankets saved Piokee actual suffering on her journey to the Reservation. Fauqua spared one blanket from her scanty camping outfit, and with this she made a tiny wicki-up in which Piokee, wrapped in the Navajo blankets, curled herself night after night, the parents sleeping near her in some leafy hollow sheltered from the wind.

Fortunately for the wayworn girl, the breast of Mother Earth, on which she laid her tired head at night, was tender with the warmth of sunlit days, and thus the long hard jaunt of scores of miles, which occupied well-nigh a week, was made with less discomfort than Piokee had anticipated.

Scattered through the timber were the pecan gatherers, girls and women crouching on the ground in odd fantastic groups, vigilantly searching for the nuts among the leaves.

To the younger boys belonged the task of climbing to shake down what nuts were on the trees; but like their sires and elder brothers idling by the camp fire over in the semicircle of the tents, most of them disdained to work, and roamed the woods at will with squirrel club and bow and arrow.

Up-a-tree, who was a champion climber and had thereby gained his name, was shinning up a sycamore trunk, clinging like a treetoad to the slick white bark. The resemblance was the more complete as Up was dressed from top to toe in gunny-sacks, from which Piokee had evolved a shirt and pair of trousers in great haste on her arrival at the Reservation, to clothe the almost naked little fellow.

"If Up would only climb the pecans, instead of sycamores and cottonwoods, he might shake down the nuts, and risk his bones for something useful," sighed Piokee, watching with fear and trembling the wiry little acrobat performing perilous evolutions in the tree-top.

"Up-a-tree say he not work like girl. Grow up big Injun," Fauqua said.

She was balancing against a pecan-tree a rough precarious ladder she had made by whittling notches in two long slim poles, and winding grape-vines back and forth across them for a brace. Up this she was about to crawl, with crotched pole in hand, to shake the lower branches of the tall pecan.

"We must try to teach him better," said Piokee patiently. "Up will have to change his ways and go to work like smart little Nanno, or he'll never make a truly great Indian whom Nanno and I will be proud to call our brother."

Nanno was squatted in a queer round heap on the ground stirring up the leaves for nuts. Dropping down beside the little worker, Piokee took the small rough hands between her own soft palms and held them tenderly. The child looked up as if in wonder at this marvelous new sister, so unlike in speech and manner any being she had ever seen.

"What are you thinking, tiny still-tongue?" asked Piokee, studying the weirdly solemn little face. "Are you wondering what makes a truly great man — red, or white, or black — no matter what the color of his skin? Feeling big doesn't make him so, for the bigger he feels the smaller he is sure to be. He needn't have a tall form, nor strong muscles, nor swift feet — though my chief has all those — but he must be strong, and wise, and beautiful inside — not too grand to think of tender little ways for helping others, yet grand enough to never dread to do the very hardest thing himself. My chief is a truly great Indian, Nanno."

Piokee had grown talkative since coming to the reservation. The placid silence she so often kept at home amid the cheerful chit-chat of the house-



PIOKEE TOOK THE SMALL HANDS BETWEEN HER OWN.

hold was no longer possible, and she must bravely fight against the dull despair that would have held her voiceless in the presence of this dreary people who had called her back to them. Since she could no more hear the dear familiar language from the lips of those she loved, she talked it to herself and Fauqua, and, taking hold of Nanno with a yearning grasp, she told the child her inmost thoughts, and sometimes fancied that the little shy still creature understood her meaning.

"Trees cry," said Fauqua, coming down to shift the ladder to another spot, and standing still to listen to the rising wind. "Storm come."

"Well, let it come," Piokee answered; and she set her teeth against the wind. "Up can hover round the tent fire, as he has no shoes or jacket, and has lost the cap I made him. I'm thankful Nanno has a warm long coat and hood and leggings."

With the help of Fauqua, who was really skilled with the needle, though like many civilized women she had plied it hitherto in fancywork alone, Piokee had comfortably clothed her little sister from a half-worn blanket she had cleansed and made into a suit.

Nanno rubbed her hands upon her red coat, gazing at another little girl near by, whose only garment was a tattered calico frock. Was Nanno wishing that this child, with all the other little reservation gypsies, had a civilized elder sister to invent new

ways to keep them warm, to gently wash their hands and faces, comb their tousled hair, and kiss and cuddle them at unexpected times?

"Poor little shivering thing!" exclaimed Piokee, following Nanno's glance. "And there are so many more like her because their mothers haven't learned the way. It seems as if the whole world, if it only knew, would go to work to help them. And I thought you wouldn't miss me, Nanno, because you'd never known me. I wonder which we miss more, what we've had and loved and lost, or what we've never had and have so sadly needed?"

The only answer to this query was a sharp whoop from above, and with a whirl of arms and legs, Up parted from a sycamore branch, and alighted on the ground. With an elfish grin peculiar to himself, he seized his squirrel club, and darted off in search of new exploits.

"Dear me!" Piokee said, "I thought wild horses couldn't tear those canvas trousers, but Up has left a piece of one leg hanging to the tree. I shall have to patch it with a flour sack, and he will have a 'Best Flour' label running round his leg in red, white and blue. Won't that look too funny, Nanno? If you don't laugh at that, I shall surely have to shake and tickle you until you do."

Nanno kept her eyes still fixed reflectively on Piokee's face.

"I care," she murmured, in a curiously unchildish tone, finding her speech at length.

Of Nanno's few intelligible words, gathered from her parents' broken English, "I care" came oftenest from her lips.

"Poor little soul!" exclaimed Piokee, catching Nanno in her arms. "You needn't care — you mustn't care — you are too young to care! Dear me, I'd like to be a fairy with the power to whisk you out of life a single instant, and bring you back a happy, laughing little girl, like Miriam and the other children in that lovely world you've never seen."

Piokee almost lost her voice; but swallowing the big lump in her throat, she fell to work picking up the nuts that Fauqua had brought down.

While thus engaged, she felt that she was being pelted on the back with nuts, but looking round could not at first discover whence they came.

There was a group of girls beneath a tree not far away, from which a half-grown boy, more gallant than his fellow youngsters off upon the hunt, was shaking nuts.

Despite Piokee's friendly smiles, the girls had kept aloof from her thus far, staring, some in half-shy wonder, some in open envy at her neat attire that had not yet begun to show the wear and tear of roughing it.

This bright-faced, soft-eyed girl of their own race, with gentle voice and manner, clad in civilized gown and jaunty outing cap and ulster, was a revelation to these gypsy maids. They themselves were dressed in calico short-gown skirts and leggings, having faded shawls or blankets hugged about them for a wrap, and covering their unkempt heads.

As Piokee glanced toward them, one and all seemed gravely occupied in gathering the nuts and dropping them into the bags suspended from their necks.

No sooner had she turned back to her own employment, however, than the nuts again began to pelt her. One sharply struck her cheek.

Looking round a second time, she saw the unkempt heads turn quickly from her, and a sly smile skip from face to face.

She now felt sure these girls had thrown the nuts; she was startled at the thought that they had done this in a spirit of petty persecution which might soon become more open.

The youngster in the tree appeared to be enjoying the mischief with the girls, and was peering down on Piokee, slyly curious how she would receive the challenge.

He was surprised to see her smilingly walk over to the nutters, and flitting lightly round among them, open each one's bag with a caressing little

movement to drop therein a handful of her own nuts as a good-will offering.

The girls made no resistance ; but in returning to her tree Piokee heard a low ejaculation and a short laugh, whether in derision or good nature she could not determine.

The pelting ceased, however, and the pacified besiegers held a muttered parley. After some demur from their companions, two of them came shyly over to return the offering with a double handful of their nuts.

They knew no word of English, nor could Piokee speak the Indian language, but the friendly, helpful spirit of the civilized girl, reaching out to these less fortunate young sisters of her tribe, needed no interpretation.

Meantime, over in the semicircle of the tents, where the old and young men smoked their pipes before the camp fire, something of the deepest interest was going on.

A party of wild-looking strangers had arrived in camp that afternoon, to be received with most unusual ceremony. Other visitors in noiseless, hurrying squads kept riding in, until the camps were outnumbered thrice over.

Boys were sent the rounds to call the women to the tents to cook a feast with reckless hospitality.

"Injuns hold big council. Talk ghost dance,"

said Fauqua, hauling down her ladder, and hoisting it upon her back.

"Oh!" said Piokee, with a thrill of dread, "I didn't think there was any danger of our tribe joining in the ghost dance. They have not been on the war-path for so many years."

"War-path still there. Messiah lead Injun on," was Fauqua's ominous reply.

Now came Cold Blast, stalking through the wood, and beckoning to Piokee. Wondering what he could desire of her, she went with him.

She did not fall behind him, as did Fauqua when she walked with her liege lord — no servile Indian customs for Piokee — but with a quick, light step kept even pace beside him. He led her to a place between the camp fire and the inner row of councilors, where she stood before the dark strange faces and stern watchful eyes of the assembled braves, with beating heart, but calm courageous mien.

CHAPTER XIII.

BEFORE THE COUNCIL.

HANDING Piokee a newspaper, Cold Blast said to her:

"Messiah runner bring white man's paper. Little tame squaw read ghost dance news. Wild Injun not know how."

A confusion of strange thoughts rushed upon Piokee as she realized that she only, of all those in the camp, could read the printed words.

She glanced about the silent, waiting audience, in whose melancholy faces was a smoldering resentment of long-harbored wrongs, wishing she might be inspired to make a glowing speech in their own tongue, and convince them that the Indian Messiah was but a myth to lead them to disaster.

"Read," again commanded Cold Blast, vexed by her delay.

Looking through the paper hurriedly, she found the latest tidings from the Northwest, and began to

read. First came official news from Pine Ridge Agency.

"'The Indians here are suffering for food. I have nothing to give them.'"

Cold Blast interpreted the gloomy tidings to the men in council, and a deep resentful murmur spread among them. One commanding brave of the party of wild strangers rose, and made a speech of some length, emphasized with vehement gestures.

Just as she began to read, Piokee saw a most peculiar-looking youth, who seemed to have arrived in camp that minute, take his station right behind the outside row of men, and standing with his back against a tree, survey the scene with keenly curious eyes.

This newcomer wore a civilized garb, but much ashamed of it did he appear to be, for he had turned his coat and vest and trousers inside out, and was bristling with inverted seams, and hems and pockets, and an odd display of airy linings.

There was a rakish dent in one side of his Derby hat, and sticking through the holes with which the crown was riddled, was a furious array of buzzard quills, that pointed fore and aft and upward, in a comically distracted way.

When the brave ceased speaking, Piokee read on at a signal from her father.

"'Plenty Bear, an old-time friendly Indian, who

lives at Wounded Knee, twenty-five miles northeast, comes into Pine Ridge Agency with an alarming report. He says the Indians at Wounded Knee, numbering over two thousand, have resumed the ghost dance, with many war-like accompaniments. They have taken the oath to resist interference, if it costs the last drop of their hearts' blood.'"

An exclamation of applause arose from one and all, and several of the men leaped up together and began shaking hands with one another, as if joining in the oath of their Dakota brethren. This brought the rest upon their feet, and the youth in inside-out apparel was also seized with the enthusiasm. Darting forward, he joined with gusto in the ceremony, and did not fall back to his station by the tree till he had wrung the hand of every brave.

While this was going on, Piokee glanced still farther down the column, and saw that there was far more thrilling news to come. Indeed, she feared that, should she read it all, it would set the men, already so excited, fairly wild.

She had heard a startling rumor that the first outbreak in Dakota was to be the signal for the gathering of the red warriors North and South. Remembering this rumor she decided to omit the lines reporting how the Indians in the vicinity of Wounded Knee were pillaging and burning the cabins of the white settlers, who were fleeing for their lives; how the Indians

were all well-armed and full of courage; were familiar with the places where the troops were being sent and knew where was the best place to strike, when the time for a general outbreak should come.

This, and much more, she passed over, and when the hand-shaking ceased and the men sat down again, she was ready with the part she chose to read. This told how General Miles was hemming the insurgents in on every side; how the troops were sleeping in their uniforms, with arms and horses ready for an instant move, and nothing would be left undone to make the charge on the big bands at Wounded Knee and Porcupine an overpowering success.

"'It looks like a move that means utter extermination to the red warriors, if, when the military close in on them, they refuse to lay down their arms,'" was the concluding sentence.

"Ugh! White man's print no good. Tell bad news," muttered Cold Blast. And he snatched the paper from Piokee's hand in great disgust and threw it in the fire. She felt relieved to see it vanishing into smoke.

When, as he dismissed her with a final nod, she turned to leave the spot, she saw a look of deeper gloom upon the faces of the men, and caught a glance of quizzical surprise from the youth who leaned against the tree.

Had he understood, without interpretation, all that she had read, thought she; and had he also read the press dispatches and detected her omission?

Yes; she was quite sure he had, for now there was a gleam of mocking laughter in the sharp black eyes of this queer youth, who seemed a civilized being turned back to savagery.

Piokee made her way to Chipmunk's grazing spot behind the tents, where, with other ponies, he was lariated near a patch of wild cane, feeding on the fresh green brake.

"Chipmunk dear," she murmured, with her arms around the pony's neck, "there is to be a ghost dance in the camp to-night, and everything will be so strange and frightful — like a nightmare that I once had at home.

"A cold storm is coming on, and we must both be very brave. You will have to stand out in the rain, and if I hear you whinnying for your nice warm stall and sweet delicious oats, I'll have to cry in spite of all.

"There'll be some dreadful strangers in the tent for supper, and while they're sitting on the ground, eating mush and squirrel with their fingers, I shall all the time be trying not to think about the lovely dining-room at home, where the soft light will be falling from the chandelier on the snowy table, with its pretty china and its sparkling glass and silver.

"O, Chipmunk, Chipmunk! are you homesick day and night, and every hour, and every minute? I am sure you are, you look so woefully forlorn. Your mane and tail are snarled with burs, and your coat is very frowzy, for I have no currycomb and brush to keep you sleek. But I love you more than ever, if you're not the handsome little fellow every one admired so much at home."

She dropped a few pathetic tears on the tangled mane, and Chipmunk gently pawed the ground and gave a soft appreciative whinny, as if he fully understood the trying situation, and was grateful to his little mistress for her warm devotion to himself, regardless of his changed condition.

Piokee then applied herself to picking out the burs, as she had often done before, since Chipmunk had become a gypsy pony.

While thus engaged, she chanced to glance around, and saw the queer youth picketing a pony to a tree near by.

She wondered if he had observed the little scene between herself and Chipmunk, and overheard what she had said.

He raised his savage headgear with a touch of civilized ease, and stepping up to Chipmunk viewed the tangled mane with dubious eyes.

"That's a big job, and perhaps you'd like some help," observed he. "But I don't know if 'twill

pay. There's plenty more to stick to him when these are pulled out," was his rather shiftless afterthought.

So welcome to Piokee was the boy's straight English, spoken in a clear, though careless tone, that she forgave the half-indifferent air with which he offered his assistance.

"Thank you," she responded, as he went to work, not very zealously, on the pony's tail. "It is a task, but not so great as others I have undertaken," with a little sigh.

The boy regarded her with questioning scrutiny, then leisurely picked out a bur and tossed it in the air.

"Are you a runaway?" he asked, with a curious stress on the personal pronoun.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ESCAPED LUNATIC.

"ARE you?" Piokee quizzed back, warding off his question.

"Yes," he frankly owned. "An escaped lunatic. The Messiah craze, you know. The papers said the fellows were vamosing from the others schools, so I shot out between two days. I've come to help the Indians fight the white men."

"And I," said she, "have come to fight the Indian."

"Whew! that sounds loyal," he exclaimed with much surprise. "When may we look for the first outbreak?" somewhat jeeringly.

"It has taken place already," said Piokee calmly. "I've convinced one good little woman who was pining for the new way, but didn't know just how to make a start, that hominy is better boiled in salted water than in bacon brine, that beans should be picked over very carefully, and washed and

rinsed before they're stewed, and that the kettle, and tin plates, and spoons need cleaning after every meal."

"Oh! a missionary cook. Well, you won't exterminate us that way," and the boy threw back his head and gave a mocking laugh. "See here," he added, growing serious, "the men were all on fire to hear about the pillaging and burning, how the dancers were raising the cowboys' hair, and the cowardly fellows were rushing helter-skelter to Ben Libbit's ranch, too scared to keep about their business. Why didn't you read the full report?"

"I didn't dare," said Piokee. "I knew the men were very much excited, and was afraid they'd start right out to follow the example of the Northern Indians, and do something dreadful to the Oklahoma settlers. But how do you know I didn't read it all?"

"Had the paper in my pocket, and knew it word for word. Bought it yesterday in Oklahoma City, where I stopped to trade my silver watch for that ungainly little beast I had to have to reach the camp. Heard there was to be a ghost dance here, and made a rush to be in time to take part in the fun. Meant to read the paper to the men myself. It's a wonder they would listen to a girl. Indians don't believe in women's mixing up in politics," and the youth assumed a lofty tone. "That was a dangerous game you tried," he added warningly. "The

men were waiting very anxiously to hear of an uprising in the North, and if they knew you'd skipped the best part they'd take you for an enemy to the cause. Shouldn't wonder if they'd even think there was a spy in camp, especially those Western savages that are working up the ghost dance craze."

Piokee was quite startled at this possible grave result of her omission. She had thought it but a harmless strategem to check the fire until the ghost dance had been held.

"Well," said she, "I am at your mercy, if you choose to read the paper to the men yourself. The rumor of the outbreak may be false, and even if it be true, I thought the less said of it to-day the better, though of course they'll hear it very soon."

The boy reached inside his coat, drew out the paper from a pocket bulging from one hip, tore it into shreds, and stuffed it carefully into a woodchuck's hole near by.

"I'll have a long ride to town to-morrow for another paper, but 'twill let you out and I shall get a later one. By that time there'll be news worth reading, and 'twill be huge fun to start out with the Cheys and Raps as a Messiah reader."

"Are those wild strangers Cheyennes and Arapahoes?" Piokee asked.

"Yes; I heard of them before I struck the camp. Was told they're keeping very sly, as they are off

their reservation, without a ticket of leave from the big white man, who says to the Indian, you sha'n't and you shall. They expect to slip round over several reservations, and set a pot of mischief brewing in them all."

"But can there be real danger of an outbreak in the Territory?" said Piokee with a shiver.

"I hope so," was the war-like answer. "I'd like to help wipe out the Oklahoma settlers and make a raid across the Kansas border."

"O, no, no! you surely wouldn't wish to do that," she exclaimed in horror. "I have friends there on the border — the dearest friends in all the world; I should be distracted if I thought they were in danger."

Again the look of quizzical curiosity, as if Piokee's history would be of interest to the youth.

"Perhaps you've been at school over there, and found the white folks friendly," he surmised. "The pale-faced fellows treated me first-rate at school, and I was chummy with a few of them. 'Twill seem a little queer to have to take their scalps, if any of them ever fall into my clutches on the war-path."

"You must have been at school a good while," said Piokee, seeing very plainly that this civilized young backslider was no raw recruit in the compulsory education ranks.

"From a little chap of eight. I'm seventeen

now," he answered wearily. "Doctor took me East just after father died" — Piokee gave a little start — "put me into trousers and a straight-jacket, and I haven't drawn a free breath since, till now. I was at Haskell Institute four years after Doctor got through college in the East, and for the last two years I've been in torture at a white boys' Agricultural School. I've worked out, or shirked out, summers on a farm in one place and another. They grind us red-skinned fellows through the routine mill, you know. Doctor was afraid the wild Indian fever would break out in me worse than ever, if I once got back to the reservation. He expects to make a big two-section farmer out of me. Imagine how 'twill strike him when he sees me wearing paint and feathers as a full-fledged ghost dancer."

"Doctor is your step-brother — Dr. Whistler — and you are Naopope, and I'm very, very sorry you are here in this way," said Piokee, as she gave the civilized young savage a glance of mingled recognition and reproof.

"And you are — bless my moccasins! I wonder if you are Piokee — the goody-goody girl I've heard so much about from Doctor!" queried Nao.

"I am Piokee, but I'm not a goody-goody girl," she answered humbly; "I ought not to find one word of fault with you, for I'm a runaway myself."

"Oh! ah! Well, well! I'm very, very sorry you

are here in this way," laughed the mocking scapegrace, with a burst of whimsical delight.

"But I couldn't help it," she exclaimed. Then came the story of her flight from home.

Nao listened with the keenest interest, and tossed up two burs, when he had heard the whole, in warm applause of Cold Blast's course.

"Your father understands his hieroglyphics," he remarked with satisfaction. "There should be a gathering in of all the children of the tribes. The Messiah will want to find us on the reservation, when he comes to turn things upside down."

CHAPTER XV.

THE GHOST DANCE.

AN enormous pile of brush had been collected by the squaws, to feed the two bonfires that threw their glare across the magic circle wherein the ghost dancers were to hold their orgies.

In the hasty preparation for the dance, ghost robes were beyond the reach of many, but one Messiah-crazed devotee sacrificed his cotton tent to furnish winding sheets, in which a number of the dancers wrapped themselves.

"Whatever should we do if father were to strip our tent in pieces?" Piokee said to Fauqua, as from the door of their tepee they watched the shrouded forms that wore the ghost robes, gliding to and fro before the dance began. "Our neighbors have no room to spare, but a storm is coming, and we'd have to crowd in somewhere. How forlorn we'd feel."

"The Messiah is expected when the pigeons turn

round on their roosts at midnight," said Nao, bursting on her vision in full ghost-dance rig. "He'll fix things up all right, and give us regular Fourth of July weather. Tepees will spring up at the waving of his wand, and our departed ancestors will flock back from the happy hunting grounds, driving herds of deer and buffalo. There'll be no lack of elbow-room, for all the whites will be exterminated in a jiffy, their towns gulped down by one tremendous earthquake, and the reds will hold the fort alone, precisely as they did before Columbus poked his nose into the Indians' affairs."

Nao had cast off his coat and vest, and wore a strip of tent cloth pinned with thorns around him for a ghost shirt. He had rolled his trousers to the knee, his feet and legs were bare, likewise his arms and head. His face was streaked with yellow paint, and the buzzard quills had emigrated from his hat-crown to his scalp-lock. Wound around his waist were cords of grape-vine, under which was tucked a fringe of squirrel tails. A tuft of hair resembling a human scalp-lock, but really red fox-fur, dangled from a string about his neck. The look of merry mockery was still on his face, in curious contrast to the fierceness of his make-up.

"Do you think I'll do?" said he, straightening proudly up in huge enjoyment of Piokee's look of horror.

"You are truly hideous, and you couldn't have chosen a surer way to heap disgrace on your brother," she replied with gentle scorn.

"Humph!" ejaculated Nao, with a real Indian grunt. "My brother heaps disgrace on me by turning a cold shoulder to the ghost dance picnic. He pretends to be an O K Indian, but he is a white man from his standing collar to his gaiters. Shouldn't wonder if he'd try to bleach his skin, next thing, and raise a blonde mustache. Bah! an Indian is a played-out curiosity without his paint and feathers, and his scalping knife and war-whoop."

Seeing words were useless, Piokee turned away, while Nao took his place among the dancers.

Happily, Cold Blast's Messiah fervor did not rise to such a pitch that he contributed his tepee for ghost robes. It remained a place of shelter, and into it Piokee crept with Nanno, while Fauqua joined the squaws and girls who sat upon the ground behind the dancers, and raised their voices in a weird, monotonous howl. They were accompanied by the tomtom, beaten by an aged brave, whose dancing days were over.

Up, and other embryo warriors, occupied the middle ground, between the dancers and the squaws and girls, gloating on the spectacle and envying their sires and elder brothers the exalted privilege of joining in the revel.

"Nanno," said Piokee, sinking down before the tent fire, with her arms about the child, "the craze has seized the camp, and the ghost dance has begun. Father is a dancer; Up is looking on and wishing he were old enough to be one, too. Dr. Whistler's brother is in the dreadful scrape, and mother is among the singers. She can't help believing in the Indian Messiah, like all the rest who've gone stark crazy, though I'm sure she doesn't want to in her heart of hearts. She knows the dear Lord Jesus loves the Indian, and will take care of us and give us all we need as He thinks best. She knows it, Nanno, but she has forgotten it just now. But we must not forget it for a single instant. Nanno, Nanno, do you understand? The dear Lord Jesus is the true Messiah and the only one to help the Indian."

"I care," said Nanno, with her solemn eyes uplifted to Piokee's.

"Yes; you may care now — you must care — you are not too young to care for this." Her voice grew more intense in its appeal. "Out of the mouth of babes has thou ordained strength because of thine enemies," came to her; words she had so often read with Mamma Prairie.

But a strange unrest had seized Piokee. Through the flapping curtain at the door of the tepee she could see the whirling figures of the dancers, and

she suddenly became possessed of a desire to be near them, with her eyes upon the terrible but fascinating spectacle.

What was the meaning of it all? she asked herself in breathless fright. The superstitious spirit of her race — was it taking hold of her like all the rest, and was there no escape?

Grasping Nanno's hand she rushed into the open air, and smothering a wild desire to join the singers and lift up her voice with theirs, she retreated far into the background, where she threw herself on a bed of leaves against a log, hugging Nanno in her arms.

Yes; the frenzy was upon her, and her faith in Jesus was fast slipping from her. Nothing more than empty words now seemed the prayers she had been taught to offer up at Mamma Prairie's knee. If Jesus was the Indian's Messiah, why had He so long forgotten them, and left them as the pitiful outcasts of a scornful world? There must be a new Messiah, who would have a heart to love and pity even the unlovable, forbidding Indian.

Ah! yes, in very truth the new Messiah was coming. She almost fancied she could hear the rustle of his feet among the wind-tossed leaves, and the music of his voice above the pandemonium of the ghost dance.

A rustle of feet there surely was, and Piokee

started with an eager tremor as she heard it close behind her.

A man had ridden up on horseback, and was now dismounting with an agile spring.

The bonfires threw long flickering rays into the rear, and by their light Piokee saw a straight, lithe figure which she knew at once, although his face was turned from her, as he was fastening his horse's bridle to a tree.

"O, my chief! my chief!" she cried, dropping Nanno from her lap, and starting up to clasp her hands about his arm. "The new Messiah is coming — we think he will be here at midnight, and the ghost dance will be kept up till he comes. Don't you see them over there?" pointing to the whirling, swaying figures of the frenzied dancers. "They are growing more and more in earnest. He must surely hear their cries and come to-night."

"I should think so — if he's ever coming. Those howls would raise the roof of the firmament, and penetrate the region of the ghosts if it were possible. I heard them miles away," said Dr. Whistler dryly, as he turned and faced Piokee. He showed no more surprise at seeing her in this strange situation, than if the meeting had been previously arranged.

"Oh! you don't believe it," said Piokee, beneath the spell, and shocked by his lack of reverence.

"But I do. I have been converted since the dance began. And we all do — father, mother, Up, and even little Nanno — or she will as soon as I can make her understand. And you mustn't try to change my faith. You would be very cruel if you did."

She was trembling with excitement, and her face, across which swept a red glow from the bonfires, wore a rapt, exalted look.

"Well, well, dear child, believe it, if you must, a little while," said Dr. Whistler soothingly, "and I will share your vigil, if you are resolved to watch for the Messiah — who can never come, alas! for our deluded people," he was about to add, but checked himself, remembering her appeal that he would not attempt to change her faith. "But you have on no wrap, and you are shivering like a leaf." She had left her ulster in the tent. "I must throw a shawl about you."

Stepping to his horse, he reached into his right-hand saddle-bag, took out a long, warm shawl, and wrapped Piokee in its fleecy folds.

"Oh! this is nice and soft, and so sweet-smelling," she exclaimed, drawing it about her in a kind of dazed delight. "Why," she bent to look at it and stroked it softly, coming slowly to herself, "it looks and feels like Mamma Prairie's shawl." She snatched it off and held it up between the firelight

and her eyes, then gave a quick, pathetic little cry, and hugged it tightly in her arms. "It is the dear, warm pretty shawl that Miriam and I have snuggled in so often — we two sitting out on the piazza steps to watch the stars! It smells of violets, like all of Mamma Prairie's lovely things." She held it to her face and hungrily inhaled the faint delicious odor. "Oh! the precious shawl, and precious Miriam and Mamma Prairie. Did they send it with their love, and did you bring it straight from home? Why, I am all back again!" She spoke as one awaking from a dream. "There is no new Messiah. The dear Lord Jesus loves the Indian, but oh! I am so homesick — and I must go home."

Sinking down, she hid herself beneath the violet-scented shawl, and moaned and wept.

"I care," said Nanno, squatting by her side, a timid, patient little figure, not venturing to intrude within the sacred cover of the shawl.

Piokee took her quickly in, and wet the red hood with another gush of tears.

Dr. Whistler whisked out his handkerchief, but turned away, and let her ease her heart by crying till the fountain of her tears ran dry.

He fixed his eyes with much anxiety on the ghost dance that had now become a perfect bedlam, the dark, fierce faces of the dancers gleaming with exultant fire, their bodies swaying faster and

still faster, in fantastic rhythm to the hubbub of the chant. The dancers joined their voices with the singers, each according to his gift of speech, expressing his uncomplimentary opinion of the white man, and imploring the Messiah to make a speedy end of him.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE YOUNG DANCER'S DOWNFALL.

AT length Piokee became calmer, and rose to a less dejected attitude on the log, where Dr. Whistler sat down beside her, holding Nanno on his knee. They were unobserved by the others, for the whole camp were completely spellbound by the ghost dance, and all eyes were riveted upon it.

As well as she was able for the din that filled the woods, Piokee hastily explained her flight from home. When she had finished, Dr. Whistler said:

"A telegram from Mr. Bowers, saying you had disappeared, came to me in Washington, and I at once suspected you had joined your people. I remembered your disquietude during my few hours' visit at the ranch some weeks ago, and the advice I gave you just before I left — about your duty to the imaginary little brother and sister, as I unwittingly expressed myself. Little did I think there were real ties to draw you here."

He settled Nanno's sleepy head against his breast, and mercifully refrained from showing disapproval of Piokee's secret course.

"By rare good fortune I had closed the business that had taken me to Washington, and on receiving Mr. Bowers's startling telegram I took the first train West. Stopping at the ranch, I learned that Mr. Bowers and Ebenezer had pursued the soap peddler, whose orchestra they thought you might have joined, to find themselves on the wrong trail in their search for you. I assured Mamma Prairie of my belief that I should find you with your people, though I could not understand what claim there was upon you here. I knew nothing of your father who, it seems, has lived until lately on a distant quarter of the reservation where his wife belonged.

"Coming to the reservation, I searched from place to place, and in a few days found your father's hut. I learned his history from an aged squaw named Keotach, living in the village. She knew him years ago, in Kansas, and also knew of your adoption by the little claim-girl. It was through this Keotach that he traced you to the ranch, lay in wait for you, and finally persuaded you to leave home as you did."

"Of course you can't help blaming me for running off in so sly a way, though you are too kind to tell me so," Piokee said remorsefully.



PIOKEE AND DR. WHISTLER WATCHING THE GHOST DANCE.

"How can I blame you, my poor child, when you have but followed my advice?" said he. "Perhaps it was the only way, but had I known the truth it would have cost me something of a struggle to include you in the host of tender young crusaders that must be sacrificed to save our race," he added mournfully.

"Mamma Prairie — you will send her word and ask her to forgive me?" said Piokee, almost breaking down again.

"Yes; I will send a letter from the nearest town as soon as I can reach it," he replied. "It will comfort you to know she is still trusting in her foster-daughter, however great the mystery of her disappearance."

"Dear, dear Mamma Prairie! But tell her that I cannot leave my people. I must always stay with them. Nanno couldn't spare me now. She cares, you see, and Up will care, too, just as soon as I can find some way to make him."

Nanno's care was very plain, but for Up she gave a rather doubtful sigh.

The squaws were throwing on fresh fuel, and the bonfires sent another flood of light into the rear where sat the three, the child now fast asleep in the strong arms clasping her.

"Yes; you will have to stay," said Dr. Whistler, turning to Piokee with a poor attempt to be as

brave as she. For himself he could be brave unfalteringly, but for her — he knew so much and she so little of the way before her. "Nanno's hand has held the torch to burn the bridge behind you, and you can never recross it. However, you and I are on this side together. I shall take what care of you I can, and trust in God to do the rest."

It comforted Piokee inexpressibly to know her wise, strong friend would not be very far from her at all times, in his journeying here and there among the sick on the reservation.

But right before her was the ghost dance, and she had forgotten for a little while that there was Nao with the dancers. Should she tell his guardian now, or would he find it out himself ere long?

"Oh!" she cried, starting up and covering her eyes with both hands, but to drop them suddenly and gaze once more on the ghost dance, "Nanno must be put to bed, and I shall have to stuff my ears with grass, and tie a bandage on my eyes, and cover up my head inside the tent, or I shall be bewitched again. But you must stay and watch. Some accident may happen to — some one — they're all so terribly excited; and you may be needed near the ring."

Dr. Whistler carried Nanno to the door of the tepee. There Piokee laid her on a wolf-skin spread upon a bed of leaves within, and covered her with

the Navajo blankets. The child slept sweetly on, unconscious of the din about her.

But Piokee could not keep her resolution not to look again on the ghost dance, and no sooner had she settled Nanno in the leafy bunk than she hastened to the door, and drawing back the curtain closely watched the scene. Dr. Whistler was standing just outside, like a sentinel on guard.

The ring was now in full view, and every movement of the dancers was distinctly visible to their eyes.

As they watched the violent gyrations, all at once they saw a boyish figure, overcome by the exertion of the dance, give way and fall unconscious to the ground.

Dr. Whistler was springing forward with professional promptness, when Piokee breathlessly exclaimed:

"It's Nao! Oh! be quick, or they will trample on him." And she started also to the rescue.

"Nao!" whirling round to her. "Have you lost your senses, child? Don't follow me. Go back into the tent," was the almost fierce command.

She obeyed; but peering from the door she saw a number of the squaws dragging Nao from beneath the dancers' feet.

Dr. Whistler was well known and much respected as a loyal leader in his tribe; and even those who

clung to medicine-making as the proper faith for a religious powwow, did not scorn the treatment of this wise physician when their tongues were furred with fever, and they were racked with pain. The squaws fell back as he approached, delivering the unconscious boy into his hands. Fauqua glided on before him, and he bore the limp form, drenched in clammy sweat, to Cold Blast's tent. They were followed by a small procession of the squaws and girls, whose interest in the fate of the young dancer led them to forsake the revel for the moment. But the dance went on as ever.

Piokee spread a blanket on the ground before the fire, and the boy was laid thereon. She also brought a bag of leaves, and placed it for a pillow underneath his head.

Nao's face looked wan and set, but scarcely more so than his brother's bending over him.

"I thought the boy was safe in school," said Dr. Whistler, with a sharp pain in his voice. "Was it not enough that you were here, Piokee? Is there no end to this wretched snarl in which we are all twisted up?" he questioned in despair; "no way that it can be unraveled?"

"Yes, my chief; the end is in God's hand," replied Piokee, kneeling down to gently bathe the painted face. It was now her turn to soothe the doubter.

The squaws and girls were hovering round the spot where Nao lay; but being urged back by a wave of Dr. Whistler's hand they squatted near the door, and watched intently for some sign that life was not extinct in the young dancer's prostrate body.

"I say, old fellow, that's enough," gasped Nao, coming to himself, and struggling to escape the strong restorative Dr. Whistler was holding to his nose. "I was dreaming of a ghost dance — and I tell you it — was — glorious," he murmured in a sinking tone.

Finding Nao had not wholly danced the breath of life away, the singers made haste to rejoin the ghost dance chorus — all save Fauqua, who had somewhat lost her fervor through the interruption. At Piokee's earnest wish she did not leave the tent again.

While the squaws and girls were taking leave, Nao swooned again, and lay for some time in a pallid stupor.

"Ah, Doctor, is that you?" opening his eyes with a bewildered stare. "Well, old fellow, glad to see you — no, I'm not; you're the very person I don't care to see just now," he broke out, rising on one elbow, and struggling to escape the Doctor's hands. "It's all as clear as moonshine now. I was getting on first-rate when all at once my head began to spin, and I began to dance a whirligig, and every-

thing turned black as pitch. Bah! the school has made me weaker than a squaw. Let go of me. I'm going back to dance it out, and show what kind of stuff I had in me before you went to work to spoil a first-class warrior with your civilized coddling."

"No, my boy," said Dr. Whistler, pinning Nao firmly, but not roughly, to the ground; "you've had enough of it for once. Lie still, and go to sleep and dream of better things than the tomfoolery going on out there."

"Let go of me, I say!" yelled Nao, struggling still more. "I'm going back to dance it out, I tell you."

"Spare your puny strength, my spoilt young warrior," said the Doctor, striving very hard to keep his temper. "After all is said and done, you will still be right here under my control. You are suffering from a pronounced attack of the Messiah craze, and if you become too violent I shall have to treat you as I sometimes do my other patients in delirium."

"How is that?" asked Nao, resting on his back to scan the resolute face above him.

"Administer a powerful but harmless anæsthetic. You will go to sleep and not awake, I hope, until the crisis of your mania is past."

"Well, you've beaten me this time," said Nao, giving up; "but I warn you it will do no good

You've been trying to make a white man out of me too long. Hereafter I shall be a regular old-time whooping savage — where's the smelling bottle, old head-chief? Ugh! I'm dancing that — confounded — whirligig — again." Here Nao, to his ineffable disgust, had another fainting fit.

The doctor quickly raised his head, and once more brought him to consciousness.

Seeing that he was completely overdone, Nao now became quite docile, and without a murmur took the stimulant that Dr. Whistler dropped into his mouth from a little vial taken from the medicine case the doctor carried in his pocket.

Before long Nao fell into the heavy sleep that naturally follows a complete collapse of nerve and muscle. Wrapping him more closely in the blanket, Dr. Whistler spread his top-coat over him to guard against the chilly air that filled the tent, and watched beside him with an anxious, careworn face.

Sitting down before the fire, Fauqua dropped her head upon her knees and slept. Piokee crept into the bunk with Nanno, in a little nook which she had parted off by hanging up a crazy patchwork curtain — Fauqua's work of art — wherein were blended scraps of blankets, gunny-sacks, and even cast-off leggings.

CHAPTER XVII.

NAOPOPE'S FAME.

THE ghost dance ceased at dawn, the ardor of the dancers being dampened by a dismal rain that began to fall toward morning.

Having sought the shelter of the tents, to snatch a little sleep and such food as the camp afforded, the braves were ready for another council before the Cheyennes and Arapahoes stole away to stir up mischief elsewhere.

Nao, who awoke clear-headed, though stiff-jointed, in the morning, feared that he would be an object of derision, owing to his lack of stamina to endure the dance; but to his surprise and satisfaction there was set afloat a rumor which soon became a settled fact, that "Young Queer Clothes," as he was called, had fallen in a trance occasioned by a special outpour of the spirit of the new Messiah on him alone.

Thus he became a hero of much note, and but for his extreme youth would at once have been ap-

pointed a prophet of the red god, with full license to expound the hidden meaning of the new religion.

He was called before the council and minutely questioned as to his experience while absent from the flesh, as was supposed, communing with the august ruler soon to come. This embarrassed him to some extent, but he artfully dodged the questions, thanking his stars that Dr. Whistler, who had left the camp that morning, was not there to burst the bubble of delusion that had won him this false fame.

"Of course I kept mum, shook my head, and hinted that the secrets of the happy hunting grounds mustn't be let out to common fellows," he confided to Piokee with amazing frankness, after he had passed the ordeal of the council interview.

"But you couldn't pretend you saw such visions as they think you did. Of course you wouldn't stoop to such deceit as that," Piokee said, with dawning disdain in her serious eyes.

"Why, it's just this way," evaded Nao, "if I'd told them my pegs gave out last night, I should have broken the record of the ghost dancer by being accused of false modesty. I could truthfully declare I saw stars tumbling heels over head — when I struck the ground — and they took that as a sign that the white men will do likewise when the Indian Messiah orders him to quit the world. At

any rate, I'm solid with the Cheys and Raps, and they've engaged me for a reader, promising to spread my fame abroad."

"But don't you see how you are worrying Dr. Whistler? Does he know what you intend to do?" Piokee asked.

"Yes; I told him just before he left camp, and to my surprise he didn't try to talk me out of it. He said I'd need some Indian toggery to be a fit associate of the Cheys and Raps, and offered me the cash to buy a blanket and the other fixings. Said I'd have to buckle on a tomahawk and scalping knife to be a regular old-timer; but I told him I could make a pistol do till I was fairly on the war-path."

"O, dear, dear! he's killing you with kindness, and you're trying to break his heart," Piokee cried reproachfully.

"Well, I shall be alive to-morrow, all the same. A whooping savage isn't often killed with kindness," answered Nao. "And the old head-chief isn't as soft-hearted as you may imagine. He has turned me out of his tepee, so to speak, into the howling wilderness to beat my way or starve. He says a civilized doctor and a whooping savage would disgrace each other in a brotherly respect. If the civilized way is wrong I ought to be ashamed of him, and if the whooper's way is wrong he ought

to be ashamed of me. Good reasoning that, and I agree with him."

"Oh! it is all so very dreadful," sighed Piokee, "and I know it makes our good kind doctor miserable to have to cast you off. But you can't be in deadly earnest, for you're laughing half the time, and an Indian who really means to rob and burn and scalp looks far more fierce than you; in spite of all your paint and feathers you are only thirsting for adventure, like so many other foolish boys, but you'll get tired of it soon enough. When you've ridden through the rain and sleet and snow, and slept out on the ground without so much as a wicki-up for shelter, and you're cold and hungry and discouraged to the very tip end of your toes, you'll be ready to come back and be a civilized boy again, and Dr. Whistler will forgive you everything."

"Well, have a monstrous sandwich laid up in your missionary cupboard, and I'll eat it with my humble pie when I come back starved out," laughed Nao. With a farewell wave of his savage headgear he left the dripping tent to mount his pony and ride forth to buy his Indian toggery and the papers with the latest ghost-dance news. He was to meet the Cheyennes and Arapahoes next day on another reservation, ready to begin his work as a Messiah reader.

The pecan woods along the river bottom having

been well stripped of nuts, the little band of campers pulled down their tepees, to re-pitch them in the village straggling along a creek some miles away.

More fortunate than many others, Cold Blast had a hut some little distance from the village, hence his old tepee, brought from Fauqua's quarter of the reservation with his other scant effects, was stowed away beneath the hut-roof when the family came back from nutting.

Cold Blast was just starting for the agency to sell the nuts that filled his rickety creaking cart. This vehicle was balanced on two wheels of different size, which gave the cart a very tipsy air, as if the smaller wheel were constantly revolving in a rut.

Piokee, who had learned to dread the terrible father somewhat less as she became more used to him, plucked up courage to beseech him to expend the pecan money for such articles of food and clothing and for household use as were sadly needed by the family. These she strove to fix on his memory by the plainest explanation she could make.

"Now, father, don't forget the soap and broom and washtub, and the clothesline and five dozen clothespins. Then there's what we need to eat — flour and sugar, beans and salt, and all the rest. I've written down a list of everything, and you can give it to the man who keeps the store. Here it is; and pray don't lose it on the way," and she went

down into her pocket for a piece of coarse brown paper she had neatly stripped from a hominy bag on which to write the memorandum with the treasured pencil she had brought from home.

"And, father, maybe some of those poor Oklahoma settlers near the border, who have got starved out and had to quit their claims, have sold some of their rickety chairs for almost nothing; do please buy them. Chairs, you know, are what you use to sit on," and she gave a little downward dip as an expressive sign. "They're made of wood, and maybe you could get a half-dozen — poor old things — for something like a dollar and a half.

"Perhaps," she went on with her plans, while Cold Blast squatted like a massive statue on the load above her, listening as if his ears were made of copper, "you will stumble on a rusty cookstove you can get for very little — say two dollars. I sha'n't care how old it is, if it will only work. You must have seen a cookstove somewhere, father — what you make a fire in, you know. It has an oven in the back to bake in. I do want to set up the tepee and put the stove inside of it, and have a little school and cooking class," she ventured. "The girls could bring what food they have to eat at home and cook it in the class, and have their dinner all together in the tent. It would be clean, at least, if there were nothing more than beans and

hominy; and I could teach them how to read and write."

A grunt escaped the copper statue that appeared to struggle into life from sheer amazement at these strange demands.

"Ugh! proud white man eat sweet flour stuff. Stick up on chairs. Burn fire box," slowly thinking out the list she had named. "Indian hate white man's road. Messiah smash white man's things. Feel heap mad little tame squaw have school. I swapee nuts, buy new war-gun, fight white man. Messiah say heap good." With this he waked the span of tousled mustangs and started on his journey

"O, dear me!" exclaimed Piokee, as the queer craft lurched away. "Father doesn't need another gun. I'm afraid he really is preparing for the war-path, mother."

An expensive hunting outfit had been purchased with the greater portion of Piokee's Christmas gold, her father throwing in his old gun to the bargain. What had not been spent in this way had been used to pay "big boot" in swapping ponies, as Fauqua had foretold.

"Get heap mad Cold Blast buy new war-gun?" Fauqua asked, seeing that Piokee's face was clouded with anxiety.

"No," she answered; "I shall try to be as peaceable as you and Nanno. You don't scold, whatever

happens, and Nanno is a perfect little martyr to endure Up's teasing ways so patiently."

"Brave warrior fight. Good squaw hold tongue," was Fauqua's meek reply.

"But we must have food, and it is dreadful to be sitting on the floor on skins, and eating from our laps," Piokee sighed. "I don't believe that father'll ever want to learn the white man's way as you and Nanno do."

"I walk little while in white man's road long time back," said Fauqua musingly.

"Oh! did you? When — where?" Piokee eagerly inquired. "I thought so; for you seem so different from the other women here."

Dropping down upon the ground, Fauqua clasped her hands about her knees, and began her history. Piokee listened from the doorsill of the hut, Nanno sitting on the floor within, fondling her doll, and studying her gayly-colored picture-book.

"I little girl so old." Fauqua counted thirteen on her fingers. "White schoolmother come beg father I go school. He say no; hate white man's road. She beg more. He say no, no; ugh! go way. She go. Come back soon, beg heap hard. He smoke long time, say yes. I go. White schoolmother heap kind. I happy. Read some, cook some, sew good. Hear white schoolmother read Bible. I pray white Messiah."

Fauqua paused a moment, meditating on the past.

"Grass grow twice," continued she. "I love white school heap much. I pray I stay long time; till hair turn white."

Here she again forgot to talk, and sat with eyes upon the ground, in silent thought.

"Dear little girl! I know how beautiful it is," Piokee softly said, as if the years were swept away, and she were speaking to the wistful child to whom the glimpse of the new life meant so much.

"No school little while one time," went on Fauqua. "I go home to the tepee. See Cold Blast. He say I worth heap ponies. Father say he trade. I beg no; lie down on buffalo skin, cry all day; cry all night. White schoolmother hear, come beg father I go back school. He say no, no, no! She pray; I pray. White Messiah have no ears. Not help poor little Fauqua.

"I marry Cold Blast; try hard be good squaw. Try hard keep on in white man's road. No use."

"Oh! you poor, poor little mother," cried Piokee tearfully. "And you were not so old as I by one year when your father sold you — yes, sold you! And my father bought you! But it was because they knew no better," struggling to draw the veil of charity across the shameful barter. "I don't wonder that you lost all heart and gave up trying, and forgot so much of what you learned. But you

shall go to school again. We'll have a little class right here at home, and I will teach you all I know. I sha'n't forget one crook nor turn of the white man's road, you may be sure of that," she added pluckily.

"Cold Blast burn books Piokee cry hard?" Fauqua asked forebodingly.

"Oh! do you think he would do that?" returned Piokee, looking startled.

"Burn books white schoolmother give me. I hide Bible. Keep all time."

"So you loved your Bible best of all? I'm glad of that; and you did right to hide it. I shall hide mine, too, and all my other books, if there appears to be the slightest danger that they will be burned," Piokee said determinedly. "O, dear! I can't help wishing the command had been: 'Children, obey your parents — when you can; but some things you must do, parents or no parents.'"

And the gentle daughter and the meek young wife formed a double resolution that the civilizing process should go on, in spite of all the master of the hut could do to hinder it.

"Now," said Piokee, starting up with energy, "we are to clean house through and through while father is away. We've several blessings to be thankful for, with all our straits. I'm glad a squaw-man built this hut, for he knew how to make a roof

that doesn't leak, and a chimney that will carry off the smoke instead of puffing it into our faces, though he wasn't wise enough to keep from squandering the hut by trading it to father for two ponies — one of them stone blind. And an Indian never would have built a lean-to, as the squaw-man did, to make a pigeon-hole for Nanno and myself to sleep in.

"First of all we'll carry everything outdoors to air. Of course you're going to be a little man and help us, Up," she cheerily presumed, as the small bushwhacker, whose incessant raids upon the innocent friskers of the outdoor world kept him mostly out of sight, deigned to tarry for a moment at the door with the inseparable squirrel club in hand. "Here's a blanket you may hang upon a bush and beat and beat till it is free from dust."

Running out and picking up a stick she began the work herself, to show Up how it should be done.

Up stood watching her, with a mysterious meaning in his bead-like eyes. But when she ceased to wield the stick, having given him his lesson, she was glad to see him fling aside the squirrel club, as if to try the work himself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UP'S FREAK OF INDUSTRY.

TRIPPING back into the house, lest by her presence she embarrass Up in the performance of his novel task, Piokee found that Fauqua had drawn out into the middle of the room a curious trunk of deerskin stretched upon a frame of wooden hoops. She was down upon her knees beside it pulling out the contents, mostly Indian finery of her own skilled handiwork.

These treasures, which were rarely brought forth from their hiding-place, delighted even solemn Nanno, and she seized Piokee's hand and drew her to the trunk.

There was a quantity of bead embroidery, nicely worked on buckskin, or on flannel of the gayest hues. A fancy workbag, several pairs of moccasins, large and small, a splendid shirt with scarlet body and the yellowest of yellow sleeves, a cunning match-safe, a tobacco pouch and an elaborate pipe

case were among the beaded articles that Fauqua proudly held up, one by one, before Piokee's dazzled eyes.

The marvel of the many treasures was exhibited last of all. It was a little bonnet of the finest, smoothest buckskin, dyed a veritable baby-blue and worked with tiny stars of pink and blue beads on the crown. There was a fluff of turkey plumage, stripped with delicate precision from the quill and fashioned in a band about the rim. Jaunty blue strings, crossed and held together by a pink star, gave the finishing touch to this bewitching little dress affair, that only needed a demure childish face beneath the soft brown fluff to make it irresistible.

"What a dear little bonnet," said Piokee. "It was made for Nanno, I suppose, and how cunning she must look in it."

"Cold Blast wear it next full moon. Look heap fine," said Fauqua, poising it upon her hand and viewing it with pride.

"What! is it really father's?" asked Piokee in amazement. "Why, I didn't once imagine that!"

The vision of her big grim father wearing the coquettish little bonnet was too much for even serious Piokee, and she burst into a merry laugh, the first that had escaped her since her sorrowful flight from home.

"Injuns have big show dance. Cold Blast dance

in little head-rig. Feel heap proud," was Fauqua's explanation.

"Oh! I've heard of those spectacular dances," said Piokee, ceasing now to wonder why this inappropriate attire. "The men put on a load of finery and parade before the women to be admired and praised. And will he wear the beaded shirt and all the other fixings?" going off into another peal of laughter. "Do forgive me," growing serious as she saw that Fauqua looked a trifle hurt. "It's very rude to laugh, but I have never seen a bonnet on a man, and it must look so funny."

While all this was going on above the trunk Up was darting back and forth, dragging out of doors blankets, clothing and all other shakable things that he could seize upon. Piokee watched him absently between her bursts of admiration over Fauqua's needlework, vaguely wondering at his sudden freak of industry. She was reminded of the fact that Up was carrying on the airing siege alone by Nanno's pulling at her skirts to draw her to the door.

"I care," said Nanno, pointing upward.

On the topmost branches of a towering tree were hung in fluttering array the things that Up had taken from the hut. Among them was Piokee's only gown, except the one she wore, her cap and ulster, Mamma Prairie's shawl and Nanno's hood and cloak. More alarming than all else, Joan of

Arc, the cherished doll, was swinging wildly in the upper air, suspended by her muslin skirt.

Up had disappeared, likewise his squirrel club.

"Why, they are in the very sky," exclaimed Piokee, "and no one but Up can get them down. He must have wrapped them round his back to climb the tree with them. The sun keeps playing hide-and-seek, which is a pretty sure sign that it's going to rain. If it does the things will all get wet and Oh! dear me, what shall we do?"

Fauqua looked discouraged, thinking like Piokee, that it would be useless to depend on Up to bring down that which he had hung aloft.

"Well, we'll leave them up there, since we have to," said Piokee, "while we carry out the ashes from the fireplace and scrub the walls and floor and wash the two poor little windows. Never mind the dolly, Nanno," as the child looked up distressedly to where the darling of her heart seemed struggling to free herself from the entangling bough. "She's indestructible, like Up himself. It wouldn't hurt Joan of Arc to get completely drenched."

Fauqua and Piokee now began the work of cleaning house, Nanno tugging with a vim to help dig out the ashes that had long been gathering in the fireplace. After these were carried out and dumped into a hollow out of sight, a war was waged against the dust and dirt on walls and floor and windows.

Piokee had been thankful to observe on coming to the hut, that Fauqua had an old broom, and a scant supply of soap laid by for an emergency, and that a special interest in soap and water could be easily aroused in her.

A blazing fire was kept up to dry the hut, and when the task was done the atmosphere within was greatly changed.

Last of all Piokee made herself and Nanno tidy, Fauqua following her example by going through a thorough bath from which she came forth with a shining skin.

"Now we can't do another thing," observed Piokee as she combed and patted down the bangs she had begun to train on Nanno's forehead. "We have cleaned the hut, but Up has stripped it bare of bedclothes, and the bunks will have to stay all whichway," glancing round the living room and into her denuded pigeon-hole. "Dear me, I do believe it's spitting rain this very minute!" running out with nose uplifted to again inspect the weather.

With eyes upon the clouds, she almost ran beneath the feet of Dr. Whistler's horse, just stopping at the door.

Bending down the rider warmly grasped Piokee's two hands that were joyfully upheld in double welcome; then his gaze went upward to the tree-top.

"'Whither, O whither, O whither so high?'" he

asked with some surprise as he beheld the singular decoration.

"'To sweep the cobwebs from the' — hut. 'Twas Up, of course," replied Piokee ruefully. "We were cleaning house and I persuaded him to help. While I was looking over mother's treasures in the trunk and didn't notice him, he carried all those things outdoors, and there they are. He's gone off squirrel hunting, and dear knows how we shall ever get them down."

"I used to be an expert at climbing when I was an urchin," said the grave straight horseman, measuring the distance to the tree-top with his eye.

"But you are not an urchin now, and I can't imagine Dr. Whistler shinning up a tree," Piokee answered laughingly.

He rode beneath the tree, and rising to his feet upon the saddle, tried to reach the lower limb. It was still some way above his head, but with a spring he bounded up, caught hold of it and swung himself into the tree. The well-trained horse stood still and waited for his master.

"Well done," Piokee said, as up he went among the branches, nimbly as a boy. "But, after all, how will you get the things? Up has hung them on the very outside, and those slender limbs will break if you creep out on them."

Whipping out his pocket knife he cut and trimmed

a long branch with a bough upon one end, from which he made a two-pronged fork. Reaching out with this, he freed Joan of Arc and tucked her carefully inside his vest, from which secure resting place she cheerily stretched down her indestructible arms to Nanno, looking up in mute appeal. One by one the other things were lifted from the boughs and dropped upon the ground, then Dr. Whistler dropped himself upon the saddle and descended to Piokee's side.

"A dozen thanks," said she, when all the things were safely housed. "For your trouble you shall have some squirrel pot-pie that I made myself. Luckily Up didn't hang the dinner kettle in the sky. It has been simmering above the fire while we have been at work. After all, it isn't going to rain." The clouds had shifted suddenly and left the sky quite clear. "You and the sunshine came together. It is beautiful to have you both at once," she smiled up with a rush of gladness that the deep blue sky was over her as ever and her friend was by her side again.

"I have something in my pocket that will add more sunshine, I suspect. Can you guess what?" responded he, smiling back mysteriously.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LOST FOUND.

"THERE, there!" cried Mamma Prairie, dropping tears of solemn joy on Dr. Whistler's letter. "I knew I couldn't be mistaken, John. We haven't failed, you see. But, oh! the poor little kidnaped missionary. If she could have told us all about it, and let us pack a monstrous box with just a very few of all the things she'll need to make her half-way comfortable in that forlorn, outlandish place, we would have given her up — I think — yes, I do really think we would have let the child go with our blessing. Don't you, John?"

"I'm not so sure of that," said John. "That sly old red fox of a father calculated very shrewdly that he'd run the risk of never getting Dewdrop, if he didn't steal her outright. At the very best it is a terrible experiment for one so tenderly reared as she has been."

"Yes, 'tis," said Sally, flying round and round

the room with a mammoth pumpkin in her arms. "'Nough ter kill her out'n' out — yes, 'tis. Sha'n't I make 'em tol'able stiff, Mis' Bowers? Punkin pies can't stan' much jouncin', an' the Injun roads is mighty rough, so Ebenezer says."

"Yes; they're full o' teeter holes an' thank-ye-marms, so I've heered Jacob say," vouched Ebenezer from the doorway, where he stood rejoicing with the others that the lost was found. "The reds don't git no poll-tax served on to 'em, like the whites; an' ev'ry blasted teeter hole mought sink cl'ar through ter Chiny afore they'd go ter work ter fill 'em up. An' that jes fetches Jacob. Him and the poll-tax hed a fallin' out when he was twenty-one, an' they hain't ben on speakin' terms, ye mought say, ever sense. They like ter keep as fur apart as possible, an' I reckon that's one reason Jacob turned into a squaw-man. Punkin pies an' thank-ye-marms ain't dyin' ter scrape acquaintance, neither."

"Pumpkin pies!" exclaimed Aunt Abigail — John had brought her over on his way from town with Dr. Whistler's letter — "why not storm the reservation with a wagon-train of pumpkin pies, followed by another loaded with ambrosia and angel-food? The whole greedy tribe would fall upon them like a swarm of locusts, and Dewdrop wouldn't get the vestige of a bite."

"True, we can't begin with pumpkin pies; but we must do something in the greatest hurry," Prairie said. "Dear me! I'm growing sorry for the Government, as much as I have blamed it for mismanaging the Indians. It doesn't try to feed them on ambrosia and angel-food, but think what agony it must endure to know that all those hordes of hungry mortals have consumed their rations in a twinkling, and are opening their mouths appealingly for more, so long before the time for them to have it."

"Pike's Peak might be piled up on Mt. Washington, with Mt. Ararat to cap the climax, and they wouldn't loom up like this Indian difficulty. And that child is trying to scale it with her poor weak feet," declared Aunt Abigail, snatching off her tear-dimmed spectacles to wipe them flurriedly.

"The step-mother is the soul of amiability, and does the best she can by Dewdrop, Dr. Whistler writes," said Prairie, thankful for this grain of comfort in the letter. "And the eight-year-old half-sister, Nanno, is a promising little creature, though supernaturally still and solemn. He doesn't say the same of Up-a-tree, the little warrior of ten years, who was out all night to watch the ghost dance, and fell asleep on the ground and crept into the tent at daybreak, thinly clad and drenched with rain."

"Up-a-tree!" went off Aunt Abigail again. "That boy must have another name as soon as we

can send it through the mail; and I'll make haste to get him into decent clothes, though I might as well expect to fit a jumping-jack I've never seen, for all I know about his measure. Ghost dancing, too, right on the edge of Christendom! 'Twould be no wonder if the earth should jump a cog, and fly off into space to shake off such abominations. Let me see — what shall we name that little savage?" And she fell into a musing mood.

"Cecil St. James?" suggested Sally. "That's the hero of the book Mis' Biddle's readin'."

"Cecil Stick-of-candy!" scorned Aunt Abigail. "The boy must have a good substantial name that he won't be ashamed of if he ever rises in the world."

"You might name him for a Puritan Father;" this from John. "Cotton Mather would be a vast improvement on Up-a-tree."

"Your father's name will do, Prairie. We will call him Adoniram," she decided.

"But there isn't any last name but the father's. Adoniram Cold Blast sounds incongruous," said Prairie.

"To be sure — a savage must be ripped up, seam and gusset, and made over stitch by stitch," Aunt Abigail replied. "Well, he can take the whole name of the saintly missionary — Adoniram Judson — though it goes without saying that he will disgrace it from the start. That little Nancy can be a

Judson, too. Adoniram and Nancy Judson sounds respectable, whatever there is back of it in the way of degenerate flesh and blood. I suppose 'twill be no use to try to change the parents' names. Mr. and Mrs. Cold Blast will be written on their epitaphs as a memorial of what America has done to civilize the aborigines."

Miriam, who had slipped away soon after Dr. Whistler's letter had been read aloud, now came back tugging two large satchels, which she dropped in eager haste.

"One is for my Dewdwop, and one is for her Nanno. Can't Ebenezer start wight off?" she said, with glowing cheeks and excited eyes.

"Why, bless the child! she's plunged right into doing something, while we've stopped to talk it over," Prairie said; and she began examining the satchels.

Uppermost in Nanno's was a crippled elephant, the joy of Miriam's heart. He was lying on his back, his trunk and three sound legs thrust upward through the satchel's gaping mouth. Beside the elephant was a wax doll, and a dainty hood of snowy eiderdown Aunt Rose had brought to Miriam on her recent visit to the ranch. She had gone back to Uncle Kearn the week before. Below were more of Miriam's choicest playthings, several picture books, a box half-full of candy, and some white

embroidered frocks and lace-trimmed aprons that Piokee wore at Nanno's age.

In Piokee's was the wooden wedding gown much crushed and tumbled by the eager little hands, the pretty slippers and the silver jewelry, a cluster of perfumery sachets, a pink silk cushion and a picture scarf, with Aunt Sweetbrier's namesake flower painted by her own artistic hands across the pale-blue border.

Two photographs came last of all; Mamma Prairie, John and Miriam grouped in one, and in the other much-embarrassed Ebenezer, with Sally dodging from his side, but taken on the flying leap before shê quite escaped the camera's range.

"Do you fink 'at's what 'ey'll need most? I can't 'member if I've fought of ev'wyfing," said Miriam anxiously.

"Yes, darling; some of them, but not quite all," said Prairie, folding up the yellow gown with tender hands. The pretty girlish things could be of no more use to Dewdrop now, she thought, and Nanno could not wear the dainty garments that belong to childhood. "My Miriam must wait a few days;" and she kissed the disappointed little face. "We'll send a box brimful of things as soon as Dewdrop leaves the woods where she is helping gather nuts."

"Going nutting is des lovely. Don't you fink so, mamma?" Miriam asked, with questioning eyes.

"When the woods are full of sunshine, yes, dear," was the answer.

"Well, I fink 'ey'll be most always full of sunshine 'cause my Dewdwop's in 'em," reasoned Miriam. "When we send a box bwimful of fings and she isn't in 'e woods, where will she be?"

"At home, love, in her father's — house."

"Dr. Whistler didn't say a house, he said a hut," reflecting on the letter. "What is a hut?" persisted Miriam.

"A tiny place to live in — sometimes very snug and warm," said Prairie, summoning courage to endure the cross-examination.

"Are vere beds and chairs and tables, and most ev'wyfing in Mr. Cold Blast's hut?"

"No," broke in Aunt Abigail; "those blanket Indians sleep in bunks, and squat like toads and Turks upon the ground, or floor — if they are rich enough to have a floor — and eat their victuals with their fingers. Yet the world predicts that the millennium day is not far off, and America is putting on some airs because she thinks she's nearer ready for it than the other nations."

CHAPTER XX.

LETTERS.

"LETTERS!" cried Piokee, as Dr. Whistler handed her two missives in their square white envelopes, both so entrancingly plump, they had required extra postage. "Letters from the lovely other world. Mamma Prairie and Floy Winslow," she decided, lingering over the addresses in a maze of joy. "I must have a pin to tear them open very nicely at one end. They are so precious that I wouldn't even spoil a scrap of the outside." And she took a little pinwheel from her pocket, slowly picking out the tiny paper cutter.

Dr. Whistler did not mar the bliss of her anticipation by offering to assist her with his penknife, but robbing Fauqua of the pail with which she was just starting for the spring, and taking Nanno by the hand, he left Piokee to herself and went to fetch the water. The mother watched him from the path in still surprise, so unused was she to see-

ing men so far forget their lordly station as to wait on women.

Piokee read the letters through and through — Mamma Prairie's, Floy's, then both again — sitting on the stump outside the hut, basking in the spring-like sunshine. Dr. Whistler brought the water, and seeing her too happily absorbed to notice him, went back to build a mimic dam for Nanno, across the brooklet running from the stream. Fauqua glided in and out, waiting till Piokee dropped the letters in her lap and clasped her hands above them, with a dreamy sigh.

"White mother not scold? Call old Injuns sneak thieves? Say Piokee come back?" she asked, in wonder that she read no signs of agitation on Piokee's face.

"No, indeed; she doesn't scold one bit. She says I am her own dear girlie just the same, though she will have to lend me to my people. And she sends her love to you, and says she is so thankful to the very bottom of her heart that you're so good to me. Dr. Whistler wrote her that."

"White mother talk good. Not hate Injun thieves? Injun hate white thieves," marveled Fauqua at the foster-mother's loving kindness, which she did not know was less remarkable than her own meek patience under heavy burdens.

Dr. Whistler, walking up the path with Nanno



PIOKEE READ THE LETTERS THROUGH AND THROUGH.

some time after, found Piokee still there on the rustic seat, dwelling happily on Mamma Prairie's words of tender cheer and Floy's delightful chatter.

"O, my chief!" exclaimed she, as he stopped before her, "is there anything in the whole world quite like a real true love letter, that is all one's own from first to last?"

"I don't know; I have never had one," he responded, with a lonesome smile.

"Haven't you? O, poor Doctor!" pityingly; "your mother never learned to write, so she couldn't send you one. And she didn't live till you had gone through college. But you've had my letters ever since I first began to print, when I was six years old."

"But they were hardly of the kind you mention," was his grave complaint. "You were always telling me how fond you were of Mamma Prairie, Miriam and the other friends — I think you even mentioned Ebenezer — but not a word about myself."

"Why, that is very strange. I suppose it was because I thought you knew it all the time. I can't remember when I first began to love my chief," she mused, looking up to him with reverent eyes. "I think it must have been when I was riding on his back to Mamma Prairie's cabin."

"Well, I ought to be quite satisfied with that, since I come before even Mamma Prairie," with a brightening of his careworn face. "I well remem-

ber what a curious interest stirred my barbarous young nature for the tender little creature so completely at my mercy during that momentous ride. Perhaps you would have been as happy now had you never taken it, since you are called back to the life I snatched you from just for a few brief years," lapsing into sudden gloom, as he thought of Piokee's change of fortune. "I suppose you would have grown up somehow with the tribe, not knowing and not caring, like the rest."

"O, no, no!" exclaimed Piokee, with a shudder. "I would rather know and care; whatever happens, nothing now can rob me of those beautiful years in the lovely other world. But I am not so very wretched here," she said, her face aglow with courage. "I've neither starved nor frozen, even in the pecan camp, where I thought it would be simply horrible. The hut is dismal, and quite bare of everything we need, but there's the bright outdoors in sunny weather. Winter in the Territory is so warm and lovely, for the most part, that I'm very thankful I am not a Northern Indian girl.

"And then — it seems too good to think of — Mamma Prairie and Aunt Abigail are to send a box of all the dear old usable things I left behind, with lots of new ones such as I shall need here, and some brand-new clothes for Up. Oh! isn't it too funny?" with a mirthful laugh; "Aunt Abigail wants to name

Up, Adoniram Judson. Think of Up, with all his antics, capering under such a name as that."

"It would be well to lay it by for future use," smiled Dr. Whistler. "The brisk, obstreperous little name that suits him to a dot just now, will hardly do when he becomes the staid young man you hope to make of him. When I entered school I placed prosaic James before happy-go-lucky Whistler, the name I won when very young, from my ability to imitate a quail. Happily, my boyish name was not too barbarous to carry into civilized life, so Whistler I shall always be."

"But only think how brave and noble Up would have to be to make the name of Adoniram Judson suitable," Piokee said. "I know about the great grand missionary who first owned it. If they are too good or too bad, names are simply a misfortune," was her train of thought. "Now there is Wak-wak Six-killer, one of my girls over in the village — she's as harmless as a kitten, but how frightfully ferocious one would fancy she must be, with such a name."

"Have you some girls over in the village?" Dr. Whistler asked incredulously.

"Yes; I met them at the pecan camp. They pelted me with nuts at first, but they didn't keep on very long. Wak-wak led the way in offering a beautiful apology. I've found out that they care if

they don't know, and it makes me happier than I can tell you."

"If they do care they have taken pains that I shall not suspect it," he observed. "I'm very well acquainted with those girls. Some of them have been my patients when the reservation has been swept with fever. I have tried for some time to awake in them a wish to learn the civilized way, but they belong to families that have seemed opposed to schools. How did you discover that the girls have any interest in that direction, little riddle solver?"

"Oh! a secret," she replied, with a mysterious little laugh. "'There are books in the running brooks,' and wishes in the eyes of shy wild Indian girls, if one knows how to read them. And I've found out another thing you don't suspect — that Nao hasn't really the bad heart, as you believe he has," she added, bracing up to meet the sternness these last words evoked.

"If you wish to please me you will never speak of that young scamp again. He has disgraced himself and me beyond endurance, and I'll have no more of him," said Dr. Whistler, in a quick decisive tone.

"But you must let me speak," pleaded Piokee earnestly. "O, dear!" she sighed, "now you are Dr. Whistler with a vengeance, and you are so

dreadfully civilized that you've forgotten all about the Black Hawk Indian, and the dose of brotherly love."

"The Black Hawk Indian, however great a rogue he otherwise would be, has to stand back and keep quiet. If he didn't I would throttle him," said Dr. Whistler, with such fierce determination that Piokee thought it well for Nao that he was beyond the reach of his offended guardian just then. "I have a world of charity for the ignorant savage, dark as is his record," he went on, "but it is mischief of the most enlightened kind which that boy is guilty of, and it is working greater injury than you can imagine to the cause which I am struggling to uphold. Yesterday I tried to offer some advice to several young men who were becoming much excited talking of the ghost dance at the Agency, but they interrupted me with jeers and laughter. One exclaimed:

"'Call back the young runner who is carrying Messiah news to other tribes, and talk to him before you talk to us.'

"Said another: 'If the white man's road is good, why does your brother leave it for the Indian's path? He has had a chance to find out which is best.'

"'Yes,' observed a third; 'send the Light Horse after him, if it is treason for the Indian to dance

the ghost dance. The civilized medicine man must have a stronger tongue than that he speaks with now, to talk us into doing what he cannot make his brother do.'"

"Oh! I'm sure he doesn't dream of all the harm he is doing," said Piokee, much appalled by the extent of Nao's mischief. "It is only that he's tired of school and wants a change, so he's gone off on a little ghost-dance lark."

"Well, he'll find his little ghost-dance lark, as you call it, very serious in its results," said Dr. Whistler, pacing with impatient steps. "You can not comprehend his grave offense, my child," he added, stopping short and struggling to calm himself.

"You have heard that my mother married Nao's father, and was taken from her house in Kansas, where she had begun to live in something of a civilized way, back to the tepee and blanket on this reservation; that both parents died in one week of an epidemic, and Nao, at the age of eight, fell into my hands.

"Ever since, I have been striving to blot out the impress of his father's influence left upon him as a young child. As he is naturally quick to learn, a passable amount of knowledge has been drilled into his head, while at heart he has remained a young barbarian. If Nao as a schoolboy cannot be relied upon in this emergency to stand fast to the princi-

ples he should have learned by this time to respect, there is nothing to him, and from now on I am quits with him."

"But you surely will forgive him if he comes back sorry," said Piokee, startled by the look on Dr. Whistler's face.

"I think not, deluded little pleader, if to forgive him means to trust him," Dr. Whistler answered, looking firmly down at her.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SURPRISING LOAD.

"THINK of me," so ran a clipping of Floy's letter, "as the mother of the mother of three hundred chicks. The grandmother, I suppose I may be called. The mother is a wooden-headed, heartless thing, without a spark of feeling for her pretty dears. Indeed, she'd be a perfect iceberg if we didn't keep her lined with fuzz and warm her with a kerosene lamp. She has no taste for insects, and the chicks were likely to grow up without the slightest training as to grubworms, but Bub Merrill, with his usual mania for experiments, fed them vermicelli for an object lesson in zoölogy, and crammed them with an overdose of sham. This caused an epidemic of the gapes, which gave the grandmother no end of work and worry, and cut off the lives of twenty of the pretty babies.

"Ellery is still studying the broken treaties. If his eyes are spared, I think he'll finish all of them

by spring. Like the rest of us, he's mourning for Bright Alfarata. He has begged Priscilla's jewel-box, turning out her string of gold beads and her amethyst ring to make room for the buttonhole bouquet of feathers he's preserving as a choice memento of the wild young squaw — who has turned out to be the bravest of the brave young missionaries. Dewdrop dear, how could you have the courage — but I made Priscilla promise not to let me write one dismal sentence in this letter; if I do she is to tear it into shreds; so as that is only half a dismal sentence, I shall hop-skip right away from it and tell you you are soon to get acquainted with Miss Harriet, the daughter of the agent of your reservation, who, we've very lately found out, is a lifelong friend of papa's. He surprised us with a call while on his way home from a short trip North a day or two ago. Miss Harriet and Priscilla were at school together in the East, though they were never very well acquainted, as they were in different classes. Pris remembers that Miss Harriet is just lovely, and so strong and independent — a regular champion of the Indian cause, her father says.

"Pris talked of her pet violinist, Ellery of Bright Alfarata, and I of my dearest chum, till it is safe to say your agent won't forget to rouse an interest in Miss Harriet for the lonesome little missionary somewhere on the reservation.

"Your agent speaks in highest terms of Dr. Whistler. He says he's built a nice frame house close by a squallid village, when he might have built it at the Agency and had congenial neighbors, just to let the blanket Indians see he doesn't mean to shun them if he is so civilized. He wants to show them that a man may be an Indian — forgive me, dear; I keep forgetting you are one — and a bachelor at that, and live in tip-top shape, and yet be on the best of terms with those who don't.

"I'm telling you all this because I don't believe you'll ever hear it from that modest chief of yours himself. He's always planning ways, the agent says, for stirring up the shiftless men and boys, and setting them to work. He keeps a lot of axes right at hand, and hires as many of the young men as he can to chop wood for his sawmill near the village. After paying them fair wages, he divides the profits of the business with the workers.

"Lemuel, the colored man who manages the farm for Dr. Whistler, runs a monstrous onion patch especially to hire the boys to bend their backs in solid work pulling weeds. At harvest time, the youngsters who have been decoyed into the patch as laborers, besides what they have earned pulling weeds, have a generous share of onions that they're proud to carry to the Agency to sell.

"And isn't it just splendid that you have this

grand good friend so near to help you in the task you've dared to set about yourself?

"You may expect a good-sized budget from Priscilla in a few days, with perhaps a fly-leaf on the nobleness of missionary work among the Indians from Ellery's sympathetic pen."

Piokee, sitting on the stump, was reading Floy's letter for about the twentieth time, when Cold Blast came in sight, the tipsy cart weighed down with a surprising load. This was in the middle of the afternoon, the next day after his departure with the nuts.

"O, mother! do look, quick," she cried to Fauqua, who was on the doorsill stringing beads. "A brand-new cook stove and some new chairs and a table, as I live and breathe! Only think — a table! Why, I didn't dare to say one word about that, and I thought we should have to keep on eating in our laps forever and ever."

"Um!" said Cold Blast, drawing up before the hut in proud array, and clambering down to view the load.

Great was Piokee's rapture at these civilized belongings which her father had achieved with one big swoop; but presently she found there was a curious motive for the reckless outlay, other than to travel in the white man's road.

"Sam Sixkiller buy new fire box, brag loud, call

me poor Injun," he explained. "I get heap mad, brag I buy it too. He brag he buy big board on legs, I get heap madder, brag I buy it too. I brag I buy high seats, he brag he buy um too. I brag I buy heap chuck, he brag he buy heap chuck. I say he stop now, get big lickin'."

"O, father! but you didn't fight him, did you?" said Piokee in alarm.

"He stop," was Cold Blast's terse reply.

"Well, at any rate, I'm glad for the Sixkillers and ourselves that all these things are bought, and I'm so thankful you two fathers didn't come to blows trying to outshine each other," she concluded, reaching up to grasp a chair that Fauqua handed from the cart.

Cold Blast did not stir himself to help unload the things till they were all upon the ground — except the stove with its utensils shut up in the oven. Then pulling out a peg he recklessly upset the cart and sent the stove with clattering tins and irons sliding to the ground. He caught it on the fly, with giant strength, however, and thus saved the threatened smashup. Fauqua, who was used to this bewildering inversion of the cart, without an instant's warning, saved herself by clinging to the dashboard.

"What a splendid cooking outfit! pots and pans and griddles and — my stars — a waffle iron!" said

Piokee, more and more astounded at the length the rivalry had run. "Everything we need to eat, and more, too," really startled at the lot of canned provisions which the keeper of the mixed store where the purchases were made had urged his customer to buy to swell the profits of the sale. "But you couldn't get all this for what the nuts brought, and I can't imagine how you paid for everything," she wondered.

"Pay some. Draw headright money few moons, pay rest," he answered.

"Oh! I'm sorry you have run in debt," said she, a cold wave sweeping over her enthusiasm. "Mrs. Biddle bought her furniture that way, and she said she thought 'twould kill her off by inches, she had to squeeze the pennies so to save enough to pay the dues. But then, she hadn't any headright money to depend on, and that never fails," bethought Piokee, and she drew an easier breath. "It seems so perfectly delightful to be handling a piece of furniture," she added, helping Fauqua set the table back against the wall. "But I'm afraid Sam Sixkiller will be our enemy now, and won't let Wak-wak come to school."

"Piokee not have school," said Cold Blast, squatting in the door in glum displeasure. "Messiah come, get heap mad. I swapee pony, get big boot. Buy new war-gun."

Chipmunk, who was like a human friend to his devoted little mistress, save that he had not the gift of speech, was always kept so near the hut that she could see him from the door and hear his gentle whinny, which she answered now and then by running out to greet him with a loving word and pat. The pony had regained his shiny coat, for Dr. Whistler had supplied the longed-for curry-comb and brush, having given those he carried in his left-hand saddle-bag to Piokee at the pecan camp.

Cold Blast eyed the handsome little creature grazing near the door, but for Piokee's peace of mind she did not see his speculative gaze, nor understand the full significance of his last remark.

CHAPTER XXII.

PIOKEE FINDS THE KEY.

OF all the trials of Piokee's reservation life Up, the wanton little bushwhacker, was by far the worst.

According to the Indian custom of allowing boys to have their own way from the time they leave the cradle on their mother's back, Up's ten short years had been a gala time of impish sports, without regard to law or order. Knowing no restraint he feared none, and a dread of accident had never marred his keen delight in reckless gambols, such as swinging in the air at perilous heights and riding vicious ponies at a break-neck speed, in graceful supple attitudes that would have made his fortune as a juvenile circus rider.

Whether he were clad or naked seemed to give him small concern in general; but at times an inborn craving to array himself in startling attire would seize him, and he would come forth a veri-

table little dandy, decked in finery from the deer-skin trunk, or wrested from his mother's scant but showy wardrobe.

Fauqua's best sack, of the gayest flowered calico, became his tunic upon one occasion, beaded moccasins adorned his feet, and strips of green and orange cloth were wound in Maypole style about his legs outside his ragged trousers, with astonishing effect. The little show-dance bonnet crowned his head, while Fauqua trembled at the ruin that was sure to overtake it, and Piokee's blue frilled petticoat caparisoned the pony that conveyed him to the village, where he joined a squad of juvenile riders that had decked themselves in similar fashion for a dress parade.

After winding through the village till their vanity was satiated by the admiration of their elders, the procession ended in a horse-race, and at nightfall Up came home denuded of his finery, which he had staked upon the race and lost. The little show-dance bonnet and Piokee's skirt had gone the way of all the rest.

Piokee was appalled at this amazing hardihood in one so young as Up. Fauqua wept in secret at the grievous loss, but held her peace, for well she knew that Cold Blast would but scowl, and smoke in silent sorrow, that the handsome little bonnet never could adorn his own grim pate in the spectacular dance.

He would not subject Up to the ridicule of all his fellow youngsters by attempting to take back the things that had been fairly won from him — according to the barbarous code of fairness.

"O, dear, dear! what would Aunt Abigail say?" bewailed Piokee, in a burst of deep despair. "'Twill never do to save the great, grand name for Up. Why, he will be the terror of our life, for he can do just anything he has a mind to. Father doesn't try to help it, which is very strange, he is so stern in other ways."

"Big Injuns brave warriors. Not dread war-path; dread papooses," Fauqua answered, musing on the singular subjection of the Indian fathers to the small braves, whom they rarely sought to rule.

But though Up did not fear his father, and disdained alike his mother's mild remonstrance and Piokee's earnest pleadings, there was one undreamed-of key to his susceptibilities which was by chance discovered.

Piokee had not played a note upon the violin since coming to the reservation, for she dreaded to awake the memory-haunting music, lest it stir with new intensity those homesick longings she was always struggling to subdue.

But the violin must not stay hidden in its case forever, and she knew the longer she deferred her practice the harder it would be to take it up at last.

So she set about it with an energetic rush one morning, having swept the floor, and built a cheerful fire, and opened wide the hut door to let in the sunshine and let out her father's pipe smoke.

To Piokee's great encouragement, her father had strolled out to work a little while upon the pole and brush shed he was slowly building for the ponies at one end of the corral.

Taking out her violin she rubbed the bow with rosin, screwed the pegs until the strings were taut, then tuned the violin, and with a resolute movement swept the bow across the strings.

With the first note off she went into a graceful waltz, circling round and round, and gliding back and forth upon the floor, playing, dancing, singing, all together.

Having whirled herself into a cheerful mood, Piokee was about to settle down to earnest practice when she almost stumbled over Up, who had been squatting on a wild-cat skin before the fire watching the bewildering spin, and drinking in the music with enchanted eyes and ears.

"More ghost dance — heap more!" he demanded, as she ceased to whirl, and hovered over him on tiptoe, looking down at his excited face.

"Oh! it isn't a ghost dance, it's a fun dance," she responded, laughing at his queer mistake.

"More fun dance — more, more!" he clamored,

and away she went again, delighted to have found some means of stirring one emotion of a harmless order in the little rogue's strange nature.

The first strains of the music had been wafted to Up's ears as he was starting on the chase, and dropping squirrel-club and bow and arrow, he had slipped into the hut to cast himself, a charmed and conquered listener, at the player's feet.

When Piokee could not dance another step, but sank into a chair to catch her breath, and then begin her practice thrilled with new and happy interest in her music, Up still squatted on the wildcat skin, to listen with absorbed attention.

"Bird in box?" he curiously asked, as she was resting from her practice with the violin across her lap.

"The music lives in there," she answered, holding down the violin that he might peer inside of it. "You wouldn't like to spoil its nest and kill the music bird? O, no! you wouldn't do that, would you, Up?" She pointed to the nest, and tried to make her meaning clear by using signs with words.

A little of his parents' broken English Up had learned by instinct, but he did not understand the whole of what Piokee said. Only now and then was there a word whose import he could catch.

"Heap no. Kill bird sing bad medicine," he said, with superstitious awe, when he had struggled with the new idea she sought to press upon him.

"But you break up nests and kill the birds up in the trees. They sing far better than the violin — poor, pretty, sweet-voiced birds!" she pityingly exclaimed.

There was another long, hard pause. Up was surely thinking now. Nanno, perched upon a chair, was stringing beads, and Fauqua was engaged in cutting out a pair of little moccasins to take the place of those which Up had gambled off a few days previously.

An odd gleam shot across Up's small dark face, and thereupon he breathed a secret that had never been revealed to mortal ear till now.

"I sharp hark. Not shoot bird sing; shoot bird keep still — whiz-z-z!" and with a quick, peculiar sound he sped a fanciful arrow through the air to pierce a voiceless bird.

And thus it was discovered that the wanton little bushwhacker had been listening to the music of the birds, and in his war upon the helpless wild things which he had not learned to pity he had spared the feathered songsters.

It was not yet time to plead the cause of those still creatures that could never charm him with a song, and so Piokee waited until she could use the key again, to gain some further access to the little red man's inner nature, where he kept his budding sentiments securely locked.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BOXES.

OH! the dear delight of those capacious boxes. Two they were, for it was found that one, however large, could not contain the absolute necessities that Mamma Prairie and Aunt Abigail sped away by mail and wagon route, to where the foster-daughter had begun her new strange life, so destitute of comforts.

The boxes were expressed in care of Dr. Whistler, who sent a man to haul them from the Agency, where they had been delivered by a freighter who had brought them from the railroad station fifty miles and more away. They were supplied with lids and lock and key, like trunks, for well the senders knew there were no closets in the hut to hold their contents, should they be unpacked.

"Pairs and pairs of snowy sheets and pillow-cases," said Piokee, taking off the topmost layer of the box she opened first in eager haste. "And oh!

the white, white nightgowns I have missed so much, and half a dozen other little ones that I outgrew at your age, Nanno. Now we'll be two dreamers all in white, just like the big and little sisters in the lovely other world. That dark brown flannel wrapper that was all I had to wear at night, and the calico slip with such a mass of patches that has been your only nightgown, were enough to spoil our dreams and make us feel like wood-mice that have never been undressed.

"Patchwork quilts from good Aunt Abigail — one, two — yes, three!" pulling out another layer; "and the pretty red-lined comforter I helped to tie myself nine weeks — no, let me think — ten weeks ago to-morrow. It was made for my own bed, and one would think 'twas stuffed with swan's-down it's so light and puffy, yet so warm. And here's another, 'With regards to Mrs. Cold Blast from A. Wilde,'" reading from a slip of paper pinned to a substantial comforter, and with a merry fling quite smothering Fauqua in its ample folds.

"Heap fine," said Fauqua, thrusting out her head and strutting round the hut with childish pride, enveloped in the comforter.

"Here are two nice bedticks we can fill with clean husks for the beds," Piokee said, as she went on exploring the delightful box. "A wolfskin mattress on a hard pole bedstead doesn't make the



PIOKEE TOOK OFF THE TOPMOST LAYER OF THE BOX.

softest kind of bed. The ponies haven't picked off all the husks, grazing through the cornpatch, and I think we'll find enough to fill the ticks. I've never asked you, mother, but I'm afraid you raised that corn yourself," she added, all at once remembering her father's plan with which he had dismayed her in the woodman's hut, that she should help the mother hoe corn in the spring.

"Cold Blast plow ground; I plant corn, hoe weeds. Big Injun not work much," was Fauqua's answer.

"O, dear me! if all the blanket Indians were not so big, there'd be more hope for them," Piokee sighed. "I wonder where it all began — that terrible mistake of fancying themselves such lordly beings that the women ought to be their slaves. I'm very sure it didn't spring from Adam, for according to the Bible, Eve could lead him almost by a string. But whom did it spring from — Jew or Gentile, Hottentot or some deluded Indian ancestor?" she queried, diving down still deeper, and fishing out a little Scotch plaid frock, a woollen petticoat and several gingham aprons.

"Hi-dum di-dum diddle-um de!
I'm not so young as I used to be,"

she sang, "but Nanno is, and Mamma Prairie told me I might keep my little girl clothes till I found

some other red-brown midget who could slip right into them — and here you are, without a bit of taking up or letting down."

Stripping Nanno of the soiled red coat she had been wearing for a frock since coming from the pecan camp, Piokee whisked the little girl clothes on to her, presently discovering some shoes and stockings that exactly fitted her. Thus the little moccasins and leggings were cast off forever.

There was clothing for Piokee and there were some comfortable garments Fauqua could make use of. Further down were towels, tablecloths and napkins, many sweet surprises Miriam had planned for Nanno in the shape of picture-books and playthings, pattycakes and candies. And with all the rest there were some small convenient treasures from the little white room which Piokee scarce could do without, yet had not dreamed that she should ever see again.

"It doesn't seem as if we'd ever reach the bottom," said Piokee, hooking up a good-sized bundle with the handle of her silk umbrella she had been rejoiced to find within the box. "Oh! this is labeled 'Adoniram Judson,'" and she hastily untied the cord that bound the bundle.

"Everything Up needs to wear. A complete outfit!" she exclaimed when she had viewed the contents. "Generous Aunt Abigail must have bought them ready-made, and sewed the buttons on again

with extra care," delightedly examining the youngster's outfit. "They are strong and warm, and really stylish, and it doesn't matter in the least if they are just a speck too large. Of course she doesn't know that Up is such a spidery little fellow. I can shorten the overcoat if it drags, and turning up the trousers legs and sleeves will be the easiest of things to do."

"A cap and mittens, woollen underclothes and several pairs of thick, warm stockings, with a pair of shoes that he can wear through flood and fire by stuffing something in the toes to keep them on his feet. Now Up will be a regular little citizen of the United States, if he will only wash himself and wear the clothes and keep from falling straight back into rags and tags."

Up had seen the boxes lifted from the wagon by his father and the man who hauled them from the Agency, and curious to find out what was in them, he had squatted on the floor to watch Piokee during the unpacking. When she had displayed the little citizen's garb, and made him understand that he must take a bath before he would be fit to put it on, he darted from the house, seizing one of Nanno's nightgowns in his hasty exit.

"Well, what now, I wonder?" said Piokee, quite bewildered by the sudden scamper.

"Up-a-tree go swim," was Fauqua's explanation.

"Why, he can't be going to the creek to strip himself and take a bath in the middle of December!" said Piokee in amazement.

Fauqua nodded placidly. "Heap tough boy. Dance on ice barefooted," she responded.

"Well, he's taken one of Nanno's nightgowns for a towel," said Piokee; "but we won't mind that if he will only bring it back. But what a cold bath he will have. It fairly sets my teeth a-chattering just to think of it."

Up did not have the strong aversion to a souse in water that is deemed a characteristic of the little red-skinned brave. He loved to swim, and as a mark of hardihood was proud to show that he could plunge into the water in the coldest weather and endure the frigid torture with astonishing composure.

"As I live!" exclaimed Piokee, coming to the bottom of the box at last, "here is the plaid coat that Big Joe, the herder, never wore but once, because his cruel sweetheart said she didn't fancy seeing men dressed up like checker-boards, and wouldn't dance with him the night that he appeared in it at Mrs. Biddle's party. He has given it to father — the extravagant, generous fellow, and I'll write a note of special thanks to him. And here's a plush cap of Grandpapa Wilde's that will be a much more gentlemanly headgear than those crippled dolls that father dresses up in when he goes away from home.

They look more hideous than ever since they've lost so many arms and legs, and one or two have fractured skulls."

The other box was filled with groceries, including flour and ham, and fruit, both canned and dried. And in a box within the box there was a set of strong white crockery, and other tableware, with knives and forks and spoons that could endure hard usage, and when tarnished be restored by scouring.

From tissue-paper wrappings in a pasteboard box inside the crockery box, came forth the napkin-ring, the knife and fork, the pair of spoons and water cup of silver that had been Piokee's since her childhood.

Fair-faced girls in well-appointed homes, have you the least conception of the joy Piokee felt in having these belongings of her civilized life once more, after drinking from an old tin cup, and eating from an old tin plate, with pewter spoon and fork with broken tines, and rusty knife blade that had lost its handle?

Presently Up reappeared, a little nude, bronze figure covered with a blanket drapery. He had cast his rags and tags into the creek in view of putting on the new suit, which he seemed quite proud to don. Nanno's nightgown he had thought to bring back, and had hung it on a bush to dry.

"After all, he isn't so completely lost in them as I was half-afraid he'd be," Piokee said, when Up

was dressed from top to toe in Adoniram Judson's clothes. "It isn't best to pinch a small boy, and perhaps he'll take a sudden start and grow to fill them out."

Having had such grand success in hustling Up into his civilized garb, Piokee was most eager to begin to renovate her father, and picking up his coat and cap, out she flew to the corral, where she thought to find him working on the half-built shed. He was not there, nor could she find him anywhere.

In coming back from the corral she noticed that her pony was nowhere in sight, and wondering how he could have strayed away when she had lariated him with care a few rods from the door, she raised her voice and called him. But he did not answer with his usual whinny and come prancing up to her as he was wont to do when called.

Wondering still more, she searched for him in the ravines and elsewhere, but could find no trace of him.

Now much alarmed, she ran toward the house and met Up trotting down the path, as if the call for Chipmunk applied equally to him, and with unusual obedience he were responding to it.

Stopping suddenly before her, Up let off a quick, expressive whinny, pointing down the narrow road that led into the timber near the hut.

"Swapee Chip. Buy shoot. Fight white man,"

was his startling explanation of the pony's disappearance.

"Oh! it isn't so, it can't be," cried Piokee, catching him by both arms in a frantic grasp. "Why, Chipmunk is my very own, and no one in the whole wide world, not even father, has a right to sell him. It would be too cruel, and you would have told me sooner if you'd known that father meant to rob me of my precious pony."

CHAPTER XXIV.

TO THE RESCUE.

BUT in spite of her reluctance to believe him, she was forced to think that Up had told the truth. His wiry little arms were smarting in her tight, despairing clutch, but he bore the pain with stoicism, though his usual elfish grin was conspicuously absent from his face.

"How did you find out that he meant to sell my pony? Do you know where he has taken him? Which way — how far — how long has he been gone? Why don't you answer, quick?" were the imperative questions which she poured out on her dazed and dogged little captive, quite forgetting that his thoughts could not keep pace with hers, and that his words were few and difficult.

"Oh! I'm afraid you'll never understand me," seeing her mistake. "Now listen hard, and try to tell me," she entreated, holding him less painfully though quite as firmly, fearing he would slip away

from her. And then, by slower, simpler speech and signs, she drew from him a further explanation.

"I hear. He tell man. Box haul. Go Agency. Swapee Chip. Man talk swapee."

"O, Up! how could you let him carry Chipmunk off and never tell me? I am sure I could have saved him some way if I'd only known it. The man who hauled the boxes came just after dinner. Father must have gone right off with him. They left at least two hours ago. The Agency is more than fifteen miles away. But we must start at once. I've never been there — do you know the way?"

Again was Up entangled in her maze of words, and again Piokee made him understand.

He knew the way, for many times had he strolled thither with his father or a troop of youngsters from the village, often staying over night, begging food and sleeping in the brush, or when the nights were frosty, in some shed or whatsoever shelter he could find.

The mother offered no objection to the expedition under Up's escort, for he agreed to lead the way, although she wondered at Piokee's daring in attempting to pursue her father for the purpose of recovering her pony. Fauqua did not fear harsh punishment for Up, as he had never suffered from paternal discipline, and she had confidence in his ability to guide Piokee safely to the Agency.

Piokee quickly changed her dress for one of dull red cashmere she had taken from the box, and slipping on her long warm ulster and her cap and mittens, she was ready in a trice, leaving Fauqua to repack and lock the boxes.

Fauqua speedily equipped her own pony with Piokee's brown plush saddle that had hung inside the hut and was not carried off with Chipmunk, while Up strapped his wooden saddle on the restive mustang he could call his own till he was traded for some other little beast.

With all her haste Piokee stopped to seize a pair of saddle-bags and fling them over Fauqua's pony, putting into one Up's blanket and into the other the Navajo blankets and some biscuit wrapped in paper. She had found some silver dollars in her purse within her little writing-desk the box had brought her, which would more than pay for food and lodging at the Agency, if they arrived in safety; but she knew not what might happen, and she wished to be prepared for any misadventure.

Overflowing with a sense of his importance as the leader of a rescue party, though the captive were but Chipmunk being led away for sale, Up swelled with pride until his ample little citizen's garb could scarce contain the length and breadth of his pomposity. That he was out in strikingly unusual apparel added not a little to his airs and graces. The

unruly mustang capered on before in highest mettle, curveting, shying, pirouetting, Fauqua's pony following at a quick but steady pace.

They rode along a narrow, grass-grown track that wandered through a heavy thicket for some distance, when they found a somewhat wider road which they pursued mile after mile, within the timber and across wide openings or small prairies, fording streams, sometimes of risky depth, climbing hills and plunging into rocky hollows.

Once they met a squad of dark-browed blanket horsemen, whose lowering stares so terrified Piokee that she trembled in the saddle. Now and then they passed a solitary hut surrounded by a few tilled acres, showing that some member of the tribe was struggling to shake off the sloth that chains the red man to a life of want.

As they pressed on, Up grew absorbed in watching birds and squirrels, quail and prairie chickens, that appeared to have cast off their shyness and come out in flocks to tantalize the little gamester, who had left his hunting weapons at the hut.

A brood of quail went scudding on before him in the road. To chase them was a natural impulse, and Up urged his pony forward. Away they whirred into the air, and presently alighted on the ground again, some way ahead, to speed into a byway, where perhaps they had a snuggery further on.

Still after them rushed Up, forgetting he had left the road, and thinking they should go that way, Piokee followed him.

With heads erect and nimble, tireless feet, the tiny things ran on until the pony almost overtook them, when they rose upon the wing once more. Thus they led the eager little urchin on and on, till finally they settled down among some hazel bushes at one side.

Scarcely had they cleared the way when a large jack-rabbit took the path, and turning, faced Up for a wink, then bounded off with tantalizing leaps.

There was another chase, two smaller rabbits and a squirrel joining in the general conspiracy to lead the travelers astray.

Piokee, who was making all the speed she could to follow Up along the zigzag path, but found it difficult to even keep in sight of him, met him coming back at length, looking somewhat dazed.

"Ough!" he muttered. "Heap wrong road."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Piokee, in dismay. "I wondered if this narrow road could be the right way, but I couldn't catch you to inquire. Let's hurry back into the road. It's growing late, and how much precious time we've lost."

It was no easy matter to retrace their steps, for there were three paths leading from the road, some way apart in the beginning, but at this point inter-

secting one another in a puzzling manner. In the whirl of turning back the riders lost their bearings, and at every step went further from the road.

The sky was overcast with clouds, hence there were no lengthening shadows to apprise Piokee of the time of day, but soon she saw that dark was settling on the timber path along which they were wandering aimlessly.

"We'll have to stay here in the woods all night, and we must stop right now, before it gets so dark that we can't see our hands before us," she decided in despair, as they were halting in the middle of a creek to let the ponies drink. "O, dear! now I have lost all hope of saving Chipmunk, and whatever will become of us? There's going to be a snowstorm, and 'twill be so cold and dark, and I'm afraid that there are fierce wild animals in these woods."

Up was very willing to give up the journey for the night, for he was tired and hungry, and withal much taken down that he had proved himself so lamentable a failure as a guide.

As they dismounted on the bank Piokee felt some snowflakes falling, and shivered at the dismal whistle of the wind among the trees.

CHAPTER XXV.

BRUNO'S DISCOVERY.

AT his bachelor breakfast-table in his sunny dining-room sat Dr. Whistler, looking through the papers which the stage had cast off at the cross-path into Lemuel's hands the afternoon before while the doctor was away upon a round of visits to his patients.

There were flowers blooming in the windows of this pleasant room, and in a cage that hung above a mass of red geraniums a mocking-bird poured out his song, swinging on his perch with jubilant activity.

"Laws a massy, Doctor, w'at yo' reckon dat peart dog done fotched in now?" said Lemuel's wife, Kesiah, coming from the kitchen hugging something under one arm, while her hands were bringing in a coffee-pot and tray of snowy biscuit, baked potatoes and a slice of pink broiled ham. "'Tain't no squir'l nur rabbit nur a woodchuck Bruno's done

scart up dis mornin'. It's a han'some cap, an' sho's yo' bo'n he fotched it in a bee-line f'om de timber."

Having placed the breakfast on the table, she exhibited the dog's discovery.

It was Piokee's cap — a little striped affair of brown and white, with tassel hanging from the pointed top. Dr. Whistler knew it in an instant. Quite a bunch of fringe was missing from the tassel, as he had observed the day she wore it, sitting on the stump to read the letters he had brought her.

Starting up he seized his hat, and calling Bruno hastened out of doors, the cap in hand.

The ground was white with snow, and Bruno's tracks were plainly to be traced. The dog, moreover, trotted on ahead, and led the way into the timber just beyond the opening wherein was Dr. Whistler's large, well-cultivated farm. His house was but a few rods from the timber's edge.

The trail that Dr. Whistler followed ended at two wood-piles, close together in a parallel line, quite near the creek by which Piokee had decided to encamp the night before. Across the narrow space between the wood-piles she had stretched a roof of cord-wood, walling up both ends with horizontal sticks. Within this she and Up had passed the night, protected by their blankets, with saddles for their pillows.

Her anxiety concerning Chipmunk and the situ-

ation she and Up were in had kept Piokee wide awake till far into the night, when she dropped into a weary sleep from which she had not waked when Dr. Whistler approached the camping place.

The ponies, lariated to a tree near by, greeted him with boisterous whinnying, at the sound of which she started up and pushed away the sticks that blocked the entrance to the little dark abode, letting in a flood of light that blinded her at first.

Great was her astonishment when she regained her sight, to find that she was kneeling at the feet of Dr. Whistler, who was standing in the snow, gazing down on her with much alarm.

"O, my dear child! what can be the meaning of all this?" he asked, with pained surprise. "My poor neglected child, what brought you here in this strange plight?"

"Chipmunk," she replied, with quivering lips. "O, my chief! he's taken him away from me — my own, own Chipmunk — father has. He didn't know how much I loved my precious pony, and he led him off before I knew it, and was going to sell him at the Agency. We started out to try to save him, Up and I, and lost our way, and had to camp out here all night. But how, I wonder, came you here? And you have found my cap! I lost it off last night while I was working on the roof, and couldn't see to hunt it in the dark."



SHE WAS KNEELING AT THE FEET OF DR. WHISTLER.

Dr. Whistler's face grew stormy as he heard her mournful little story. Striding to the ponies he untied them hastily, put the bits into their mouths, and led them to the wood-piles, while Piokee was emerging from the camping place and shaking off the snow from the Navajo blankets that had drifted in at night.

Up had also overslept, but he bestirred himself forthwith, crawling from his quarters in the further end, and dragging out his wooden saddle by one stirrup.

By the time he had the ponies ready for a start, Dr. Whistler had regained his usual calmness.

"We will seek and find the pony in all possible haste," was his comforting assurance, "but we must take time to eat our breakfast first of all. Kesiah will keep it warm for us, and I shall have the joy of seeing you, my little friend Piokee, at my lonesome table. I anticipate that you will pour my coffee, and will take delight in doing it," he added, with a cordial smile, placing her upon the saddle.

"Oh!" exclaimed Piokee, with a happy little gasp, "oh! how lovely that will be!"

Her trouble was dispelled as if by magic. She had faith in Dr. Whistler's ability to do all things, even to persuade her father to restore her pony, if he had not yet been sold, or to reclaim him if he had.

"Lor, Lem, look yander!" said Kesiah, espying

the procession coming from the woods, Dr. Whistler walking briskly on ahead, Piokee riding close behind him, and Up straggling in the rear. The two black faces peered in great amazement from the kitchen window. "It's a gal an' boy he's done fotched home, as sho's yo' bo'n, an' de gal's got on dat berry cap w'at Bruno scart up in de brush."

The wanderers found good cheer awaiting them in Dr. Whistler's comfortable farmhouse, built in Southern fashion, all one story, with verandas on three sides. Lemuel made haste to light a fire already laid within an air-tight stove, and warmed the guest room in a twinkling. Here Piokee made a hasty toilet, Kesiah hovering near to wait on her.

What joy to pour the coffee, sitting face to face with Dr. Whistler at his civilized breakfast-table, which could be extended to great length, as hospitality demanded, but was now in a cosey size for two. Up was cared for by Kesiah in the kitchen, as he could not be enticed into the dining-room.

"I wish I had you all the time, my child," said Dr. Whistler, gazing at the young face just across the table, whose beaming eyes were bent serenely on the stream of amber coffee mingling with the cream. "How would it seem were you to sit there as the years go by, and pour my coffee till you were so tall and dignified that I should hardly dare to say 'my child' to you?"

"Why, it would seem precisely like a fairy story, as it does now," said Piokee, looking brightly up to pass his cup. "Oh! you needn't almost smile because I'm sixteen and too old to talk of fairies. I shall always love the dear things like a child, and half-believe they're in the world. Lost and cold and hungry and distressed; found and warmed and fed and comforted by Prince Bountiful. Now isn't that just beautiful enough to have the fairies mixed up in it?"

"It will be too hard to send you forth so like a lonesome sparrow that has only flitted down to snatch a crumb and speed away," repined he, seeing but the stern realities of reservation life.

"But not one sparrow falls to the ground without the Father," said Piokee trustfully.

"I need your faith," said he, mixing in the sugar to his coffee with disconsolate stirs. "I must confess it shakes my trust in Providence to think that you are in the very center of the baffling Indian problem, so hemmed in by a world-defying Chinese wall."

"Oh! but the Tartars can go in and out as they've a mind to now, you know. The old Chinese wall is nothing but a heap of rubbish for over half its length," was Piokee's stroke of memory as to history. "And don't you think our wall will be that way sometime?"

"Yes; if we can wait for it to crumble into dust," he gloomily replied. "But that will never be, I fear, till we are pretty well exterminated as a race."

"It won't be left to crumble," she predicted hopefully. "They'll batter it both ways — the civilized Indians on the inside and the white reformers on the outside, till there'll be some big gaps very soon, if it doesn't all come down."

"You are a cheerful little prophet," he responded, yielding with reviving courage to the sway of this child-woman, who confessed she half-believed in fairies, yet was helping batter down the Chinese wall about the great Indian problem.

Lemuel fed the ponies at the barn and saddled Dr. Whistler's horse, and there was not a moment lost in starting after breakfast.

Something like an hour's canter in the crisp but sunny morning air brought the rescue party to a small house on the outskirts of the Agency. There was a picket fence around the yard, whose flower-beds and shrubbery, in their season, made a most attractive spot.

"This is the home of Mrs. Means, the famous baby of the Black Hawk War, whose Indian name is Wapaseta," Dr. Whistler said. "You would like to meet this interesting woman, and she would enjoy a call from you, so I will leave you here awhile. Up can go with me."

"Oh! she swam the Wisconsin River on her mother's back. I've always wished to meet the famous Black Hawk baby," said Piokee, walking up the sunny path to Wapaseta's door as if the ground whereon she trod was sacred.

In response to Dr. Whistler's rap the door was opened by a gray-haired woman of remarkable appearance. She had the wonderful dark eyes, undimmed by age, and clear-cut features which the mixed-blood Indian women often have. Her good command of English, and refined, intelligent manner, showed that she was far above the great majority of her tribe in culture.

As Dr. Whistler was a missionary doctor, so Wapaseta was a missionary nurse, and both were striving to alleviate the pain and woe which their race was suffering through ignorance and sloth.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HISTORICAL BABY.

"IT was many years ago," said Wapaseta, when Piokee asked her to relate the story of her famous swim across the Wisconsin River, which had made her the historical baby of the Black Hawk War. "You see my hair is gray, my dear, and I was then a very young child, who had seen the crocus bloom but three times in the beautiful Rock River country which our people loved so fondly, and the white men were so pitilessly fighting to possess.

"In a most deplorable condition Black Hawk and his little band of warriors found themselves upon the bank of the Wisconsin River, whither they had been pursued and overtaken by the troops.

"There was a desperate engagement, and the Sacs were scattered like the leaves before the wind. Some escaped into the woods, some crossed the river in canoes, and many fell in their attempted flight.

"My mother, who was then but eighteen years of age, had been concealed in a defile, with her belongings strapped upon her pony's back. Dreading less to face death in the rushing waters than to risk being taken captive by the soldiers, who were very near, she strapped me on her pony with the goods and plunged into the river, clinging to the pony's tail.

"The soldiers saw my brave young mother struggling with the current, and to their credit cheered her on and fired no shots at her, though many a deadly weapon had been aimed at those in the canoes.

"Before she had gone far, my mother felt it was not safe to trust me on the pony, so she swam around him and succeeded in unstrapping me and tying me upon her own back.

"When about half-way across, the pony swam into a whirlpool and went down with all of the possessions. Mother saw the danger, and avoided it by swimming to one side.

"She struggled on and on. She felt her strength fast failing, and it seemed that we must surely perish, but the sight of friends upon the other side encouraged her to persevere a little longer.

"So she buffeted the waves and neared the shore at last, and then a man swam out to help her land. But she was so exhausted that the refugees were

forced to hasten on without us, and for ten days we were there alone in the unbroken wilderness subsisting on wild onions. It was in the summer, and we did not suffer from exposure, though we had no blanket save the one I had been wrapped in for the swim."

"Did the soldiers capture you at last?" Piokee asked, intensely interested in the thrilling story of this true adventure.

"No," said Wapaseta; "but a band of hostile Winnebagoes did, and took us to the Winnebago mission on the Yellow River. We were kindly treated, and were soon released from our captivity, as Black Hawk had been taken prisoner and there was an end to all hostilities."

"Poor old Black Hawk!" said Piokee. "I've an old, old history of the Indian wars that gives his speeches word for word. In Congress Hall in Philadelphia, where he was taken while on exhibition in the East, he said:

"'My heart grew bitter against the whites, and my hands strong. I dug up the tomahawk and led my warriors to fight. I fought hard. I was no coward. Much blood was shed. But the white men were mighty. They were like the leaves of the forest. I and my people failed. I am sorry the tomahawk was raised. I have been a prisoner. I see the strength of the white men. The Indians are

brave, but they are few. While the Great Spirit above keeps my heart as it now is, I will be the white man's friend. I will go to my people and speak good of the white men. I will fight no more against them.'"

"That was a grand acceptance of his fate, and a sublime forgiveness of his enemies," said Wapaseta.

"His last words," said Piokee, "just before he died in 1838, were these:

"'The Rock River was a beautiful country. I loved my cornfields and my home. I fought for it.'"

"Collectively," said Wapaseta musingly, "the white men are our foes, but individually they are our best of friends. I have heard your history from Dr. Whistler, my dear, and mine is very similar.

"My mother lived among the Winnebagoes several years before rejoining our tribe, that had been driven westward into the Iowa country; but at the age of five I was taken to Fort Crawford in Wisconsin, by an army officer stationed there.

"I have a tender recollection of the lovely pale-faced lady of the Post, the officer's wife, who cared for me as for her own young child. But she died within a few months, and I went to live with other white friends who were wondrously kind to me. I was sent to school, and passed a care-free, happy girlhood."

"How the brave young mother must have missed you!" said Piokee. "Did you ever meet again?"

"After fourteen years," said Wapaseta. "She had then removed to Kansas with the tribe, and from there she started out to search for me. She found me living in Galena, Illinois. You may know it was a joyful reunion. She was married to a white interpreter, and had become a civilized Christian woman."

While listening to Wapaseta's interesting talk Piokee's thoughts went straying after Chipmunk every now and then. She was sitting by a window, and could see some way along the road leading from the Agency.

All at once she gave a quick, glad cry, and darted from the house, without so much as an "excuse me," in her eager haste.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A NEW FRIEND.

SHE had caught a glimpse of Dr. Whistler coming at a brisk pace, leading Chipmunk.

In a perfect frenzy of delight she rushed into the road and flung herself upon the pony's neck before his graceful trot had subsided at the gate.

"Oh! you pretty, precious little dear. You have come back to me," she cried. "My good, kind, powerful chief, who can do anything and everything he undertakes, has brought you back. And is he truly mine again?" she asked, lifting up her grateful, glowing face to Dr. Whistler, as he lingered in the saddle to enjoy the scene.

"Very truly yours," smiled he. "You need not fear another separation."

"Father hadn't sold him, I suppose. But how did you get him back?" she wondered.

"I found him in the street, surrounded by a crowd of warm admirers. He had not been sold, although

a bargain with a trader from the Pawnee Nation was in prospect."

"Oh! if Chipmunk had been taken off among the Pawnees I should never have set my eyes on him again," exclaimed Piokee, with another fervent hug. "You talked to father and induced him to throw up the bargain, didn't you?"

"I had a private interview with him," said Dr. Whistler, "after which he put his mark upon a paper giving you entire control of Chipmunk. As you are a minor you can own no property unless your father signs a paper to the contrary."

"How easily he was persuaded," said Piokee. "But I don't believe there is another man alive who could have talked him into it — and he so anxious for the war-gun, too."

Dr. Whistler suppressed a smile, and did not tell her he had paid more money than the trader offered, to persuade her father to give up the pony, and to sign the bill of sale in favor of Piokee.

Fully satisfied to get the gun without the sacrifice of Chipmunk, Cold Blast readily agreed to keep the trade a secret, Dr. Whistler knowing it would mar Piokee's joy in the recovery of her pony should she understand the whole affair.

The stolid father had a grain of conscience when it came to such high-handed robbery of his daughter as he had attempted in the seizure of her pony.

"Now that all is settled to our satisfaction, I must cruelly cut off those fond embraces," he observed, "and hustle you into the house to don your wraps. Your father will not start for home till afternoon, if he decides to go to-day, and I wish to take you on a visit to the school just over there."

"That will be delightful," said Piokee. "After all my agony of yesterday, I'm simply out on a pleasure trip. I've had a lovely time with Wapaseta, who is just the sweetest red-brown lady in the land, and now if I could meet Miss Harriet — but of course there'll be no time for calling at the agent's — I should be so happy I could fly."

Dr. Whistler looked mysterious, but made no answer.

Having partially explained to Wapaseta her sudden rush to Chipmunk, with daughterly excuses for her father, Piokee took leave of her interesting hostess, and was quickly on the way to school with Dr. Whistler.

Very soon they stopped before the roomy building in a natural grove of fine old trees wherein the school and boarding-house were carried on.

Passing through a hall, Dr. Whistler gave a light tap on a door behind which could be heard the hum of voices in the schoolroom. It was opened by a rather tall young lady with a wealth of lustrous hair of golden brown, and eyes so brightly blue, so wide

awake and full of interest in all creation, one would naturally wonder how they ever ceased from taking observations long enough to snatch a wink of sleep. She had a fine, straight form, and strong white hands that instantly went out to clasp Piokee's slender brown ones when the girl had shaken hands with Dr. Whistler.

"You needn't introduce us, Doctor, for I know just who it is," she smilingly exclaimed. "I am as sure of her as if I'd seen her photograph. Now, Doctor, if you are opposed to kissing you may turn your back, for I must measure off three yards of tape with this brave little girl — one for Miss Priscilla, one for Floy, as they requested in their letters, and the last one for myself."

Then Piokee knew it was Miss Harriet who was giving her three kisses.

"I have left a class," Miss Harriet said, "with hands up to inform me they know the difference between the way to spell cat and the hat that puss has on; so do come in and take seats on the platform."

Miss Harriet taught the primary room, whose pupils were of different ages, from the child of seven to well-grown girls and boys.

"The younger we can get them into school, the easier it is for them to learn our ways," she said aside to Dr. Whistler and Piokee.

"Have you learned Sac and Fox, and do you

speak to them in that, to make them understand before they know a bit of English?" asked Piokee.

"I know some Indian, but I never speak it in the schoolroom," said Miss Harriet. "It is English from the very start. I begin with simple object lessons of one word, which I illustrate on the board."

"For instance, Miss Puss in her fine new hat," said Dr. Whistler, with an appreciative smile.

Miss Harriet was a crayon artist of a very sprightly turn, which added vastly to her marked success in teaching Indian children. She had drawn the picture of a vain cat strutting on the blackboard, with a stunning hat embellishing her head. In this amusing lesson she impressed the class with three words — cat, hat and on.

"The bright ones soon pick up a small vocabulary of our words," Miss Harriet remarked. "Some of them are speaking English so that I can understand them in a few weeks. Others will hold back for months."

When the class before the blackboard had reviewed the three words hinging on Miss Puss, having spelled them all around and then in concert, with a few clever strokes of her expressive chalk Miss Harriet caused a dandified young cat with derby hat to meet Miss Puss in her perambulations.

"I shall leave the pictures there this afternoon," said she, "so that the pupils may become familiar

with the new one. To-morrow Mr. Puss will raise his hat to Miss Puss, and 'hat off' will be the lesson."

Piokee wished that Up were there to see all this. It could not help impressing him, she thought, looking at the rows of quiet little red men, working on their slates with patient industry.

Strange to say, Up was there, precisely as she wished. Moved by curiosity, he had followed Dr. Whistler at a distance when he led the pony from the Agency to Wapaseta's house. He had seen Piokee and her escort going to the school, had lurked behind them and had ridden very near a window, where he sat upon his pony, peering through a half-closed blind, taking in the scene, pussy cats and all.

When the noon bell sounded in the hall, off he raced at pell-mell speed. Up, the small barbarian, had really been to school, but he had left Piokee not a whit the wiser for it.

"I don't go home at noon, as there is but an hour's intermission," said Miss Harriet. "I often bring a lunch, but I shall join the pupils in the dining-room to-day. Our school-family have a plain, but wholesome meal they would be pleased to have you share. By all means you must stay and see how well they fare.

The visitors were glad to spend the noon hour at the school, instead of dining at the Agency hotel, as Dr. Whistler had intended.

The pupils marched in orderly files into the dining-room, the girls in calico frocks of uniform material, the boys in sturdy suits of rough dark cloth.

There was a seamstress at this Government school, who made the pupils' clothes, Miss Harriet informed her guests.

"But oh! who does the mending?" said Piokee. "Do the boys all fall to pieces just as if their clothes were made of cobwebs?" glancing at the tidy youngsters, swallowing with healthy zest their mashed potato, graham bread and beef stew while they gloated on the coming gingerbread, and seeing in her mind's eye Up's new garments thick with patches.

"They are apt to," said Miss Harriet, "especially the new boys that have never thought of taking care of what they wear. The girls are taught to help the seamstress with the mending, and you'd be surprised to see how patiently they darn and patch when they are longing to be out at play. We mean to try a novel plan and let each girl select a boy to mend for through the month. We're curious to see which boy will be best taken care of by his little maid."

"If there's a drone among the boys, that is averse to violent exercise, you'll find the girls all drawing lots for him," said Dr. Whistler.

"That applies to Tommy Pigsfoot," laughed Miss Harriet. "He drops down anywhere and curls up

like a dormouse fast asleep, while all the other boys are playing harum-scarum games. Of course he seldom needs a 'stitch in time.'"

So great were the attractions of the Agency that Cold Blast could not tear himself away that afternoon. There was a shooting match, in which he joined to win the can of powder offered as the first prize, to Piokee's sore dismay, for she was always in a tremble lest the hut be blown to atoms by the big supply of ammunition stowed away therein.

But by the shooting match she was enabled to accept Miss Harriet's urgent invitation and enjoy a visit at the agent's house. On finding that her father would not leave for home that afternoon, she said good-by to Dr. Whistler on the street, went back to school, and all that afternoon and evening was one supremely happy girl.

The great brick house was all aglow with light and warmth and gayety that night, the agent and Miss Harriet's mother joining in amusing games with interest equal to Miss Harriet and Piokee's.

"Our daughter has no young associates down here to keep her lively," said the agent to the merrily demure young guest who held her own with quiet ease and charmed the family with her brightness. "There is danger of her growing old before her time, so we two parents try to keep ourselves in juvenile trim to hold her back. Mother is about

the age of Harriet, or perhaps a little younger, and I am quite a boy in all respects except my grizzly gray beard. It's all on her account — this unbecoming lack of dignity," he added, passing round the slips of paper for the game of telegrams they were about to play.

"On my account!" exclaimed Miss Harriet with a mirthful laugh. "Just as if you wouldn't be a grizzly gray-bearded boy if you hadn't any serious-minded daughter for a scapegoat. Why, Miss Dewdrop, you have no idea how frisky papa is inclined to be. I really think he'd turn a somerset if I didn't watch him very closely."

"Somerset!" rejoined the agent with a sudden thought. "A whirl, an overturn, a general upsetting of the equilibrium. We'll take that as the subject of our telegram, as it is my turn to choose one. It will give us good material for some highly seasoned press dispatches from the Territory. Now, then, we have chosen our ten letters and we've just five minutes to compose the telegrams. We must send them with a whizz to reach the editor before the paper goes to press at midnight. One, two, three — proceed!" he gave the word and laid his watch upon the table.

Ten different letters had been chosen at a random dash, the players each contributing a letter round the circle till the list was made. X and Y were laid

upon the shelf as sticklers that would better be avoided. The letters stood as follows:

I T M O C A D S V B.

When the time was up Miss Harriet led off with startling headlines she had strung together in three minutes.

"Indians Topsy-turvy. Messiah Outbreak. Corageous Agent Defies Scalpers. Victoriously Baldheaded."

"Pardon my allusion to your one infirmity, papa," she said, arising from her chair to pat the bald spot where the agent's scalp-lock used to be.

Next came the agent's bit of information as to what was happening in the Territory:

"Indescribable Tornado. Monstrous Overturn. Calf Astride Donkey Stable. Vociferously Blating."

"Then he was alive for all his fearful boost," observed Miss Harriet. "Did they take him down with pulleys?" she inquired with interest.

"History doesn't say, but I'm inclined to think they waited for another little breeze to come along next day and whisk him back into his pasture," was the agent's pleasant satire on the windy region where his lines were cast.

Miss Harriet's mother thus described a little skirmish on the edge of No Man's Land:

"Ignorant Tenderfoot Mimics Oklahoma Cowboy. A Decided Set-to. Violator Bandaged."

"Those cowboys can't be imitated with success," remarked the agent. "They defend the right to their originality, though mustard plasters be the upshot. Now, Miss Dewdrop, what surprising news have you with which to stun the public?"

"I have only two scraps with a space between. I couldn't hit upon the other words," Piokee said, and read with some reluctance:

"Inverted Turnips Misgrowing On Claim, . . . Drouthy Soil. . . ."

Piokee's broken headlines raised a shout.

"I've heard of various freaks of vegetation owing to these Territory droughts," observed the agent, "but I never apprehended the condition of affairs described in Hafed's Dream. You might have spoken of the alkali connected with the droughty soil and wound up by alluding to the victimized boomers."

"I thought the telegram didn't need to be the least bit probable," Piokee artlessly remarked.

This sent the agent off into another gale of laughter. "Sure enough! the more improbable, the better it will suit the credulous public," he replied.

The happiest hour of all was passed before the glowing grate fire in Miss Harriet's pretty chamber later in the evening. There Piokee told her new friend of her missionary plans, and of her earnest wish to start the little class.

"I wish you might," Miss Harriet said, "but, oh! my dear, do you suppose it would be possible without a settled income, and with nothing but a tent to work in?"

"Why," Piokee said, "there are so many things that can be done without a settled income. And I can't imagine any situation in the whole wide world where people shouldn't do their little best for those within their reach, even if they've nothing but a tent or dugout for a working place."

"You'll do for all emergencies," Miss Harriet responded, and the strong white hand reached out to give the little brown one a commending clasp.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TRIMLY-APRONED MAIDS.

WHAT witchery did the civilized daughter exercise on the barbarous father to convince him that the little school and cooking-class were but a natural sequence to the new, strange order of affairs her coming to the hut had brought about?

Perhaps she never would have dared to push the project if her father had not been already so beguiled by this same witchery that he was led to shed the crippled dolls, to don the cap and coat, to rise from lolling on the floor into a chair while smoking by the fire, and better still, to draw up to the table for his meals, instead of squatting by the kettle on the hearth.

That the red Messiah had not appeared, according to the prophets, to inflict judgment on the vacillating Indians who had hobnobed with the white man's ways, may have had some weight in causing Cold Blast to withdraw his ban against the school.

At all events, he had set up the tent above the stump close by the house — so close it served the purpose of a kitchen where the cooking for the family was also done, with the new stove which, till now, had not been used.

Wak-wak and three other girls had been so captivated by Piokee at the pecan camp that they were moved to take a wondering interest in the school. Piokee had explained it through her mother as interpreter, while calling on the girls in their tepees, soon after the return from camp, urging them more earnestly to join the class when they returned her visit in a bevy of all four next day, and kept on coming almost every day thereafter.

The little tiff between the two sires, which had led to the supplying of unthought-of comforts for their families, had not affected Wak-wak's warm devotion for Piokee, nor did Sire Sixkiller venture to forbid her joining the class.

Wak-wak was an only daughter, and much petted in a way peculiar to a doting Indian father. Hence it is quite probable that though as harmless as a kitten in Piokee's estimation, Wak-wak had some hidden claws with which she would have scratched at opposition, and compelled her sire to leave her to the workings of her own sweet will.

And thus, so soon, Piokee had her row of dusky, trimly-aproned maids attempting appetizing cookery,

with Fauqua and the little sister likewise merged in the experiment.

For the cooking costume she had bought some cheap but pretty flowered calico, with money from her own purse, when she went in quest of Chipmunk to the Agency.

Having faith that what she was resolved to bring about would happen in due time, she set the bevy, when they came a-visiting, to sewing on their aprons, caps and sleeves, and was rejoiced to find that they could ply the needle, on plain work, as well as she herself.

The cooking costume was an easy matter, but the appetizing dinner, which the class must cook five times a week to make the project a success, was far more serious to contemplate.

One bright morning Dr. Whistler pulled the latch-string, so to speak, and walked into the fresh-air schoolroom, where he found the atmosphere so tempered by the crackling fire beneath the pots and kettles simmering on the new stove, that it was quite warm enough for ruddy health.

The four girls, Wak-wak, Cepo, Annamosa and Wanisa sat about the table borrowed from the hut, sorting beans that would have tried the patience of a saint, so mixed were they with chaff and pebbles. Fauqua occupied the stump, with Nanno on a box at her feet, both likewise wrestling with the beans.

"Evaporated apple dumplings — and they seem to be behaving beautifully," Piokee smilingly announced, as Dr. Whistler approached the stove and let his eyes alight on a mysterious kettle with excusable curiosity. "If you will promise not to scare them into falling flatter than a pancake you may take one peep at them," she added, lifting the cover, while he stooped and peered into the kettle.

The class had taken turns in scouring an old tin pan, just round and deep enough to fit into the kettle. After they could see their faces in the pan they punched the sides and bottom full of nail-holes, and behold a steamer filled with roly-poly puffs like snowballs, resting in the kettle with the boiling water underneath.

"Of course you smell baked beans," Piokee placidly continued, opening the oven door to show the contents of a porcelain kettle, which her father's wild extravagance, resulting from the tiff, had led him into buying. "They are some of those discouraging little beans the class are picking over now. Wak-wak brought them on her back — a whole half-bushel in a bag. They are real Sixkiller beans — Wak-wak helped to raise them, and she's just found out they needed to be winnowed and kept free from sand and pebbles. But I've great respect for Wak-wak's beans, because they're spared by those who haven't much to eat themselves.

"To-morrow we shall have browned parsnips and sliced bacon, with some good wide streaks of lean all through it, broiled above the coals till it is crisp. Annamosa brought the parsnips — they were buried in her garden — and Wanisa brought the bacon. Though I wouldn't have her know it for the world, I shall throw away the outside, to be sure that what we eat is very clean.

"Now you must be wondering how the beans are far enough along to smell so good when the little clock Aunt Abigail sent me says it's only half-past ten," she chattered on, while Dr. Whistler stood, a most attentive listener. "We began them yesterday, and they have baked five hours already. They'll be done exactly to a turn by noon, and you must stay to dinner and approve the cooks."

"I would be most happy if I could," said he. "I'm strongly tempted by these appetizing sights and smells, but I must be some miles away by dinner time. How far into the mystery of the dumplings and the baked beans have the class progressed?" he asked, with interest.

"I'm not so sure about the dumplings," she replied; "in fact, I fear the class would make a mess of them the first time trying; even mother, though it is a perfect wonder how she catches new ideas. But the beans — I think they would remember — all but one or two, at least — to wash them

thoroughly, and boil them till their skins would burst, if they should blow them — not a minute longer. I do hope they'd think to put a pinch of soda in the water that the beans were boiled in, and to drain this water off and add new water and a spoonful of molasses to the beans before they went into the oven."

"Do you treat baked beans that way?" said Dr. Whistler, looking dazed. "If I were one of those girls or your mother, I'm afraid I shouldn't think to put a spoonful of molasses in the water that the beans were boiled in, and should quite forget to bake them only till their skins would burst."

"Oh!" exclaimed Piokee, laughing merrily. "Do tell the class you think the beans are boiled in sweetened water, and are only baked until their skins are ready to crack open. Ask them if that's right or wrong."

"I must have made a blunder," he responded, more and more bewildered; "but I'll lay the whole affair before the class."

He asked the question in the language of the tribe. Fauqua and the girls intently thought a minute, then a slow smile answered from four faces, only Cepo showing by her puzzled manner that her memory had failed to grasp the lesson. With a gleam of white teeth Wak-wak pointed to the oven, and began to chew her finger ruefully, to show that

she would be most loth to eat the beans that might be cooked by Dr. Whistler's receipt.

"There, we won't laugh at you another bit," Piokee promised, growing serious. "I was going to tell you how to make a lovely dumpling sauce from almost nothing, but on second thought I'll let your memory rest for more important things."

"How about the dinner for four girls five times a week, if I may ask?" said Dr. Whistler. "Can they supply their share of what it will require to run the cooking class?" With all his haste he took the chair Piokee urged him to accept, while she sat down upon the roomy stump, back to back with Fauqua. The serious faces of the class were bent above the beans, which they were sorting with the greatest patience.

"I don't expect it," she replied, "but I shall encourage them to do as much as possible to make them independent. They may bring some game this winter and some garden stuff next spring, but there are all the groceries to be bought. Father'll have to run in debt for everything he buys to eat until he draws his head-right in the spring, and then when all the debts are paid there will be nothing left to take us through the other half-year. So I can't depend on him to help the class a single spoonful.

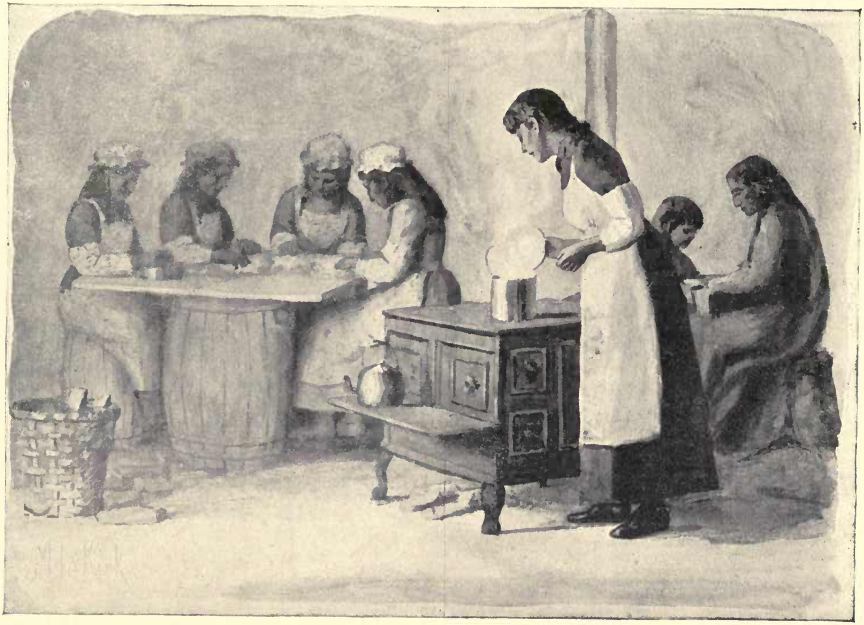
"Mamma Prairie and Aunt Abigail sent a box of

groceries which will last the class some time, though maybe it is very reckless not to save them for our family alone. Then Mamma Prairie wrote that she would send me an allowance of eight dollars every month by way of you, with which I hope to manage for the rest. If it hadn't been for those two boxes — with all else they brought us, all we need to set the table — and that beautiful allowance, I should not have dared to start the school, as much as I have dreamed and talked of it."

"You've made a good beginning, but I think you need a partner to attend to some small business matters while you superintend the cooking and the object lessons," Dr. Whistler responded, looking round to note a general scarcity of furniture.

The cooking-table was of two wide boards that had been dragged from underneath the hut, and scoured with desperate ardor, after which they had been nailed together with two cleats and propped on barrels for support. The barrels had been scrubbed inside and out, and served the purpose of a missionary cupboard, in two parts. Wak-wak faced the situation, seated on a headless keg, Wanisa on a tottering three-legged stool, which they had brought from home.

"I suppose you have been robbing Peter to pay Paul, by bringing from the hut the table and these chairs," pursued he.



THE COOKING SCHOOL.

There were three chairs in the tent.

"We had to," said Piokee; "but we manage very well when company is scarce. The stump and keg and stool are makeshifts, which we use when short of seats. Sometimes we have the whole half-dozen chairs, but father had two callers who came in to smoke with him this morning, so we left three chairs. He's given up the floor since we have had the chairs, and I'm afraid if he goes back to it he'll never rise again."

"You need a dining-table and some schoolroom chairs," continued Dr. Whistler. "You also lack a cooking-table and a cupboard, and some other small conveniences, and you will hardly stand it through the winter in the tent without a floor. Slates and pencils and first readers are in order in a primary school. I might supply these things if you would take me as a partner."

"Oh! you are too good to live," exclaimed Piokee. "It would be so perfectly delightful, and there wouldn't be another thing to wish for. But I couldn't let you," was her next thought. "No, indeed — they aren't your girls, you see."

"If they are your girls, why shouldn't they be mine?" demurred he, looking very grave. "It isn't quite as I anticipated, to be left outside of any of your plans."

"But you have your boys and young men, and so

many of the sick to do for," she considered. "It would be sheer cruelty to add a cooking class to all your other cares."

"Since I am not expected to remember the receipts, I think I can endure the rest," persisted he. Taking out his memorandum book he made a note of what was needed in the schoolroom.

"Well, if you must be so generous," said she, "please have the cupboard and the floor and tables made of white pine. That is not so very costly, and it will show dirt the best."

"Will show dirt?" he quizzically repeated. "Why, I thought that people always wished that things would not show dirt."

"I want the class to go just crazy over scrubbing," she explained. "If I should spend whole months and teach them nothing but to fairly dote on soap and water I should think it was the grandest mission in the world. Since you are so resolved to help us, you may add three scrubbing brushes to your list, if you've a mind to."

"With the greatest pleasure," he responded. "Will you have a cow that will need scrubbing, too? I have a gentle creature of pale yellow I would like to lend the class. I see your father has a pole and brush shed newly built, in which she might find shelter with the ponies. She would bring her feed, a milk-pail and some pans, and I daresay a churn."

"Oh-h!" exclaimed Piokee, with a quick ecstatic jump that made Wanisa reel upon her tottering stool. "A C-O-W, spelled with three big capitals! And a churn! Sally taught me how to make good butter, and I'd teach the class; and we would have the skim-milk and the buttermilk, besides. Now we needn't be so scrimping of the jar of butter Sally sent me in the box. We've scarcely tasted it because I thought we'd never see another scrap. We've used wild chicken fat so far for shortening. Mamma Prairie taught me that the fat of fowls does very well to cook with in a pinch, and many people use it to save butter; but of course we couldn't eat it on our bread."

"Speaking of wild chickens makes me think a flock of tame ones wouldn't come amiss with you," said Dr. Whistler. "They could roost in one end of the shed, and I suppose the class could use the eggs they'd lay."

Piokee's face was radiant, but she was silent for at least a quarter of a minute, filled with gratitude too deep for utterance.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ENTERTAINMENT COMMITTEE.

THE floor was laid, the roomy missionary cupboard stood in place, an ample table stretched its length along the floor, and there were chairs for all the class and several for company. A cooking table stood beside the cupboard and a well-filled chest of flour and meal was by the table. Buried in a pit outside the schoolroom were potatoes by the bushel, in the cupboard were some new laid eggs and shining pans of cream-topped milk.

All this the partner had brought about within a few days after his first visit to the school.

But were the difficulties all surmounted when the school was fairly underway with these facilities? Aunt Abigail discerned a host of them, which she described in characteristic language in a letter Dr. Whistler dropped into Piokee's hand one afternoon without dismounting from his horse. The letter ran in this way:

"Well, I must say, my dear Dewdrop, you have won the premium for the best invention of a laughable absurdity! I should as soon expect to hear you had a cooking class in a balloon as in a wiki-up. What kind of dirt do you like best in victuals cooked in wiki-ups — ashes, sand, or hardpan? you can have your choice in windy weather."

"That is true," laughed Piokee, having read so far aloud to Dr. Whistler, whom she had begged to wait and hear the news from home. "You'd think there was a mob of giants beating with whole trees upon the canvas when a furious wind is blowing. Yesterday we wrapped a flour sack around the churn to keep the dust out, but the butter is so full of specks we'll have to shut our eyes to eat it. But we're no worse off than soldiers on the march, or camping out in tents. I don't suppose they're fond of sand in food, but they swallow it courageously, and so can we."

"'How about the blizzards?'" asked Aunt Abigail. "'Do your toast and toes keep warm when they are raging round your cotton walls?'

"We haven't had but one," Piokee said, "and then we huddled in the hut and carried in a pot of quail stew and a lovely batch of Sally Lunns. Father had a smoking party crowded near the fireplace, and they ate up every morsel of our dinner, and we had to shove the men away and make our-

selves some mush. That tasted of tobacco smoke and soot, and — well we had a fearful time all round that day.

"How well Aunt Abigail understands the situation!" she exclaimed in wonder, after reading on a few lines. "Why, she even sees right through the very thing that worries me the worst of all, and this is what she says about it:

"'I suppose you're overrun with visitors who straggle in with free and easy sociability and stay to dinner, when their names aren't in the pot and you are plagued to scare up something to appease their hunger.'

"Yes," Piokee sighed, "it's very inconvenient, having all the mothers, sisters, aunts and cousins, liable to drop in any time for dinner when they're least expected. Wak-wak and the other girls don't know it isn't just the thing to ask their friends to come, and they do take such pride in showing off what they are learning here. The poor things love to stay to dinner and it helps to spread the influence, but it helps eat up the groceries at a shocking rate, and we can't possibly afford it. There is one great mercy, though — the men and boys don't come into the schoolroom. I've been wondering why."

"The etiquette of our tribe forbids them to intrude unless there is a man to entertain them or they have especial business," Dr. Whistler explained.

"The blanket Indians faithfully observe this rule, and are astounded that we civilized fellows dare to break it with impunity."

"I'm glad they've one polite rule and know how to keep it," said Piokee. "Not but that it is polite for you to break it," she excepted laughingly, as he threw down a quizzical smile at her. "Father doesn't come into the schoolroom either, though of course he doesn't mind the rule in this case, as the teacher is his daughter. I suppose he thinks it quite beneath his dignity to notice us, but he does relish what we cook, immensely. He and Up have just the same for dinner that the class have, though they eat it in the hut all by themselves. Up has a lordly way of seeming far above us, too, and can't be coaxed into the tent in school-hours, but I hire him to write some letters on his slate quite often in the hut."

"And what price does the little brave demand for that amazing condescension?" Dr. Whistler asked.

"A tune upon the violin for every letter that he writes six times. For extra pay I dance the fundance, as we call a waltz. He'll work away like everything if that is promised him."

"A case of artful bribery with encouraging results," said Dr. Whistler, amused by this ingenious method of securing Up's attention to the printing lessons.

"Oh! what do you think Aunt Abigail says next?" announced Piokee, going on with her perusal of the letter:

"'But these swarms of uninvited guests, if such there be, are part and parcel of the problem, and you needn't be surprised to find the bunch of straws you thought to lug about so easily, a load of iron spikes to break your back.

"'The gospel says "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," and perhaps a lump of Indians at a dinner party, with the cooking class for leaven, might go through the miracle of working good results.

"'But I would have the visitors understand there must be certain days for company, and they were not to be perpetual hangers on at other times. As far as possible the men and boys should be avoided, like the plague, for various reasons — chiefly their prodigious appetites.

"'It seems it will require a syndicate to run this cooking class of five — or is it six with little Nancy? Dr. Whistler, your foster-mother and myself appear to be involved with you in the absurd experiment. You may make me a committee on receptions if you choose, and I will add a little entertainment fund to the allowance of your foster-mother's, which she seems quite willing you should waste in playing school down there, if you don't starve your stomach

night and morning to provide that missionary meal at noon.'

"Isn't that angelic in Aunt Abigail?" exclaimed Piokee. "One would think she'd been a blanket Indian herself, she is so full of sympathy for them. Now I needn't worry over every extra bite we give away, and we will follow her advice and have our visitors at certain times, and try to make them understand they mustn't come when they are not invited. And the girls, to show what they can do, shall bake and broil and stew the company dinner all themselves, though I will have to watch them very closely.

"Only I do hope that while the party is in full swing Wak-wak won't persist in wiping dishes on her apron, as she's very apt to do if I don't keep my eye upon her, and that Cepo won't forget and put her sister's papoose she so often brings to school to tend, into the churn to keep it out of mischief, as she did the other day when we were scaring up some dinner for a lot of company. To make the mishap worse, there was some buttermilk in the churn, that Cepo didn't notice, and in scurrying around to help the others set the table Wak-wak ran against the churn and overturned it, and there was a very greasy papoose swimming in a frightful puddle on the floor."

"But since it gave the class a chance for arduous

scrubbing to remove the buttermilk from the floor and the papoose, it must have been, upon the whole, a rather fortunate mishap," smiled Dr. Whistler.

There was a queer upsetting of Piokee's plans about the opening dinner party. It was not of mothers, sisters, aunts and cousins that had come by special invitation. On the other hand it was a most complete surprise, and of a startling kind.

The news was brought up by Up one day, precisely at the noon hour, that the Mokohokos were approaching through the woods.

Forgetful of his shyness in the schoolroom, which he had been wont to shun with studious care, he burst into the tent in breathless haste to pull Piokee's sleeve as she was stirring the thickening into rabbit broth, and spring the warning on the busy teacher and her class.

"I hear. I see. Mokohokos come. I run pony," were the words she gleaned from his excited exclamation, much of which she could not understand.

The Mokohokos were a sluggish, non-progressive band who lived a few miles off. Of all the tribes they were the most opposed to schools and other innovations tending to upset the ancient order of affairs.

The class had brought reports from time to time that there was danger of the Mokohokos coming to suppress the school, but weeks had passed and there

had been no hostile movement, and Piokee had almost concluded that the rumors were a false alarm. But now she could not doubt that her benighted neighbors were about to make a visit of unfriendly import to the school, for Up was fearfully in earnest in his efforts to impart the information he had gained while on a scout of some sort which had thrown him on the Mokohokos' track.

"Oh! they must be very near," exclaimed she, starting in alarm. "And father is away from home. What shall we do?" in doubt which way to turn.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MOKOHOKOS.

"I GET war-gun. They smash, I shoot," said Fauqua, rising to the stern occasion with a rush of Indian bravery.

"No, no," Piokee hurriedly replied. "We'll fight them with the dinner; and how fortunate it is all ready. Stop!" she cried, recovering her self-possession as Wanisa was about to plunge the books and slates into the flour-bin, while Cepo locked the cupboard door and Wak-wak snatched the pot of rabbit from the stove to whisk it to a place of safety in the brush. "Don't hide one thing, but do exactly as I tell you."

All her words the class may not have understood, though they had made good progress in their English since the school began, but they could not mistake her tone and manner as she firmly shook her head and clapped her hands to check the general stampede.

She set the pot of rabbit on the hearth to cool, unlocked the cupboard door, and heaping two large plates with doughnuts, placed them on the table, which was spread for dinner. Scarcely had she done this when there was a trampling of hoofs, and peering from the door the class espied six horsemen near the tent.

Fauqua fell to cutting bread with wondrous speed, and Wak-wak, with a disapproving frown, but with swift hands, dipped out six bowls of broth and set them on the plates. Annamosa scooped some baked potatoes from the oven, and Wanisa ladled out the rabbit on a platter. Nanno crouched behind the stump, too scared to breathe, and Up, half-jubilant that there was danger in the air and he had been the first to scent it, hung about the door to watch the landing of the Mokohokos.

Presently they trailed into the schoolroom, single file, to meet a smiling little hostess at the door, with hand outstretched as if in cordial welcome.

What powerful magnet was the small soft hand of this young civilized girl, to draw three brawny fists from out the blankets wrapped about the rigid braves, and open them in a responsive handshake? One of those who did not shake hands struggled with an answering grunt, but two gave only a forbidding scowl.

Before the squad could hardly cast their eyes

toward the tempting meal, much less begin a raid on it by force, Piokee waved them to the table, pointing to the chairs, which they accepted, some with grunts and some in lowering silence, and without an instant's loss of time the trimly-aproned maids, instructed by their teacher's nods and signs, began to wait on them with wariest attention.

Lest the meal fall short before the six voracious appetites were appeased, Piokee flew to mixing pancakes — blessed makeshift for a scared-up dinner, as the class had learned. She cooked them by the dozen in two dripping-pans, while Fauqua stuffed in bark to feed the fire.

If the Mokohoko squad had never tasted buttermilk before, they drank it by the quart that day. True, it was diluted with much water, which the wily Wak-wak dashed into it on the sly to make it hold out to the end.

The raiders may have been astonished at this avalanche of hospitality, but they exhibited no sign of it as they devoured their food by ways and means that words would fail to picture. Heaps of pancakes vanished with all else, but in the end the class came off victorious to the extent of half a dozen pancakes and a pint of the diluted buttermilk.

Piokee's services as cook no longer needed while the feasting was upon the wane, she rushed into the hut and tuned her violin, and when the Mokohokos

left their chairs she had another kind of entertainment on the tapis.

She had trained the class in some gymnastics they went through with lively interest, accompanied by the violin. In rising to their feet the feasters were saluted by a sudden burst of music, and beheld a most bewildering play of arms and wag of heads. Fauqua acted with the girls, and Nanno, standing on the stump, went through the exercise, though trembling in her shoes.

The stolid faces now began to show some wonder at the strange performances of this obnoxious little school whose fame had reached the Mokohokos, and had brought the old chief, Pawshepaho, with five leading men, upon a visit of severe inspection.

What to do next was the question in Piokee's mind all the while the exercise was going on. She dared not rest from the diversions for an instant, lest the grim intruders whom the class had captured so ingeniously should suddenly bethink themselves to set about the object of their visit.

All at once the G string snapped, and the music and gymnastics came to a precipitate close.

Then Pawshepaho strode across the floor and took possession of the violin, to curiously examine this peculiar instrument, dependent on four strings for its bewitching melody.

The curiosity attacked the other five, who crowded

round the old chief to inspect the violin. One of them produced a shoestring which he gave to Pawshepaho, and routing Nanno from the stump, he took a seat thereon and gravely set to work to mend the broken string.

There was a deal of tinkering, then the violin was handed back to the performer with the shoestring stretched across the bridge and wound about the pegs.

More music seemed to be demanded, and it was profoundly evident that the Mokohokos saw no reason why Piokee could not draw rare melody from a shoestring quite as well as from a silver wire.

Here was a dilemma, but with cunning sleight of hand Piokee played a lively little jig upon the E string only, flourishing the bow with all around effect, and apparently performing on the shoestring with the rest.

Pawshepaho gave a satisfied grunt at what he deemed his marked success as a repairer of the violin, his comrades echoing the applause with similar grunts. The old chief's nephew, Keoqualk, who had scowled ferociously, refusing to shake hands on entering, now muttered "Heap fine," as a compliment to the courageous innovation he had come to help suppress.

In this way did Piokee win the Mokohokos to approve the school, even so completely that she

dared display the printing on the slates and show the pictures in the new first readers.

When the Mokohokos were well out of sight, the whole squad having shaken hands with the entire class in taking leave, Piokee played another jig upon the E string, and hilariously danced to its exultant strains, to thank Up for his timely warning, which had given her a minute to prepare for the reception of the dreaded guests.

"It looks as if there'd been a whirlwind," she declared, bringing up at length against the table, and surveying its demoralized condition with a rueful glance. "They've soaked the tablecloth with broth and buttermilk, and dear me! I do wonder how they broke two tumblers and a plate? They've spilt the salt and sugar and upset the spoons and pepper boxes, and as I'm alive, they've picked the rabbit bones and flung them on the floor.

"Well, with all the muss we've conquered them and sent them off in friendly humor. But we'll have to cook ourselves some mush for dinner, for there isn't any milk to make more pancakes. And 'twill take at least two hours, this afternoon, to partly set ourselves in order, and to-morrow what a time we'll have — washing, ironing, scrubbing, cooking all at once!"

The winter, mercifully short and mild in this delightful semi-southern latitude, had passed away.

The ghost-dance apparition which had waved its spectral scalping-knife along the frontier to the terror of white settlers, had vanished at the charge of musketry at Wounded Knee, and once more had the red man's discontented murmurs settled into brooding silence.

Cold Blast's useless war-gun stretched its length along the wall to point its boastful muzzle at Piokee, as she fancied, when she passed the spot whereon it hung.

But where was Naopope, the young Messiah reader who had left his school to recklessly participate in the ghost-dance folly? Though Piokee had not breathed his name to Dr. Whistler since his stern request that she would never speak of Nao in his presence, often did she wonder what had been the boy's fate, and whether he had found the wild life so completely to his taste as he had fancied it would be.

Piokee and her girls were on a wild flower hunt one afternoon. It was a novel expedition to the gypsy maids. Like all their race they were extremely fond of Nature as a whole, but they had never learned to note the beauty of her separate features, whether in the glowing sky at dawn or sunset, in the sparkling streams, or on the flowery sod.

To stimulate their interest, Piokee offered as a premium to the one whose nosegay had the best variety of flowers a knot of narrow ribbons, yellow, pink

and green, with half a dozen tiny tinkling bells suspended from the streamers. She had found this little souvenir with the trinkets which the box had brought her.

Then there was a search indeed. Dutchman's breeches, crocuses and cowslips, wind-flowers, violets and hepaticas, the starry bloodroot blossoms and the rue-anemone were seized by eager hands.

"Wak-wak wins it by a bunch of yellow violets that I tried so hard to find myself," announced Piokee, at the round-up, when the nosegays were exhibited for her inspection. Thereupon she pinned the prize on Wak-wak's calico sack. "Where did you find them? They are perfect beauties, but I thought they didn't grow down here," she said, as Wak-wak proudly pulled them from the nosegay and presented them to her.

"Heap more I find," said Wak-wak, as she gave herself a shake to ring the little bells triumphantly, and threw the other girls into a fit of envious sulks that showed Piokee it was most unwise to offer prizes in the present state of their advancement.

To ease their disappointment, she let down her braid of hair to give all three of them an amber hairpin for a lesser prize, and slipped a blue glass button from her pocket into Nanno's hand. This restored good humor, and the class set out to find the yellow violets under Wak-wak's lead.

The creek which wandered through the timber had a steep bank on the nearer side just here, along which ran a narrow shelf of rock some feet above the water.

The cliff-like bank above the shelf was almost bare of herbage, but in one long narrow fissure where the earth had lodged, there was a mass of shrubs and flowering plants. They had attracted Wak-wak's eye and led her out upon the shelf, where, reaching up on tiptoe, she had plucked the flowers above; it was here she had found the violets.

Piokee followed her along the shelf to view the wonders of this little wildwood garden in the cliff. This done, she found there was not room to turn round, and she must follow Wak-wak on still further, where there was a wider space before an opening in the cliff, and thence a rocky pathway up the bank.

The opening was a cave-like fissure, partly roofed with rock and partly overhung with bushes.

Wak-wak and Piokee tried to peer into the shadowy grotto, but so dazzled were their eyes with sunshine that they could see nothing for a minute.

All at once they heard a heavy breathing from within, and then a low, strange sound.

"Wolf's hole," surmised Wak-wak, thrusting in her head with reckless curiosity.

"Yes, it was a growl, I think. Let's hurry," said Piokee, seizing Wak-wak's hand to draw her back,

CHAPTER XXXI.

DEPARTED GLORY.

BUT just then came another sound that caused them both to stop and listen most intently.

"Why, it must be some one in distress," Piokee said, now very sure that they were hearing groans, and not the growls of some wild animal.

Wak-wak's eyes had peered into the gloom inside the cave till she could see distinctly, and she now discerned a human figure muffled in a blanket lying at the further end.

"He sick," she said, and stepped inside, Piokee following. Her fear all vanished when she saw a human being in the cave who seemed in need of help.

Wak-wak muttered something in the Indian tongue expressing great surprise the instant that her eyes alighted on the prostrate figure.

It was Nao, lying there asleep, and it was easy to perceive that he was seriously ill. His face was drawn and pinched with pain. He had his left arm

in a sling, which had been stripped from one end of his blanket. Even in his sleep he writhed and moaned as if in deep distress.

The class were now all gathered in the cave, but they had entered in a noiseless way that had not in the least disturbed the sleeper.

All at once the four girls took a most surprising way to show their pity for the sufferer, whom they knew to be the young ghost dancer that had won the laurels at the pecan camp.

Squatting on the rocky floor, with Wak-wak as the leader, they began a doleful plaint, or chant, as a lament for his misfortunes.

Nao started wildly up, his fitful slumber broken with a crash.

"Halloo!" he cried, with feverish anxiety, above the din, "you've got me this time, sure enough." Then, seeing but a group of girls, his panic-stricken look abated, and he stared about him in bewilderment.

Frightened by the dismal wail the girls kept up with growing fervor, and by Nao's strange appearance, Nanno burst into a fit of childish weeping, which she emphasized with piercing screams.

Piokee tried in vain to quell the singular disturbance, Nao growing quite beside himself, until he seemed about to flee the spot in wild despair.

At this pass she adopted a decisive measure. Seizing Wak-wak by the shoulders from behind, she

shook her with such desperate resolution that the wail was smothered in her throat. Then she turned on Annamosa with a like result. This burst of stern authority from their gentle little teacher brought the girls completely to their senses, and all four subsided into silence, Nanno following their example in a wink.

"I thought it was the cowboys. They were after me," said Nao, settling back to lean against the wall and heave another groan.

"No; it's just the class," Piokee soothingly assured him. "Are you badly hurt, and why were the cowboys after you?" she asked, with wondering pity and alarm.

"Oh! it's the goody-goody girl," said Nao, looking at Piokee for the first time with his feverish eyes. "Yes; it's bad enough, I reckon. There's a bullet in my arm, and — well, it doesn't make me feel first-rate."

"Oh! you poor boy," said Piokee. "Did the cowboys shoot you? And what did you do to stir them up?"

"I fell in with two half-breed rustlers over on the grazing lands, who had been branding cattle that they didn't own, and selling them. I wasn't in it — on my word — 'twas done before I met the thieves," he added, in a tone of feeble self-defense. "I overheard them talking of it, and was going to

cut loose from them. The cowboys chased us, but we got away. My pony couldn't travel like the other two, and he and I got shot. The little beast fell down, and I cut off into the woods afoot.

"I tramped it to the Mokohoko village, where the medicine man began to mumble over me, and the squaws to howl like fifty Furies, as this party did just now. I broke away, and got as far as this place and gave out this afternoon. I saw the cave from over there across the creek, and reckoned I could die in peace in here, so I crossed the water on a footlog and crawled in."

"But you don't want to die in peace, you want to live in peace and be a man," Piokee said, with bracing cheer. "Now, then, you're going home with me — to get the monstrous sandwich," it occurred to her to say, but she restrained her tongue, not wishing to remind him of the humble pie. "We'll take good care of you, and send for Dr. Whistler as soon as possible."

"The old head chief is quits with me, and I could hardly face him if he wasn't; and you wouldn't want me lying round in this shape," Nao answered, with increasing misery.

He was now as much ashamed of his wild Indian garb as he had been of civilized attire a few months previous. His blouse and leggings were begrimed with mud, one ragged moccasin was his only foot-

gear, and his once gay blanket of bright blue was soiled and faded and half-torn in two. He had a blood-stained bandage from the blanket wrapped about his wounded arm. His hair had flourished wildly during the Messiah campaign, and was now matted to his head, and much adorned with twigs and moss from camping on the ground. Vanished was his vermilion war-paint, leaving but the faintest shadow of a streak across one cheek. In truth, the glory of the young Messiah reader had departed, and he was a total wreck in fame and fortune.

"Yes; I should want you round in that shape, or in any other shape, if you were ill and needed to be taken care of," was Piokee's sympathetic answer. "And you needn't be one bit afraid to face our Doctor when he comes — for I am sure he will come when I send for him."

Thus was Nao urged to rouse himself and wend his slow way to the hut, some half a mile beyond. Growing dizzy from the pain of his neglected wound, he was ignobly forced to let Piokee lead him by the right arm, Wak-wak steering him by holding to his sides.

Piokee made for him a bed below one window of the hut, and cut away his sleeve to bathe the wound and bandage it with clean white muslin. Much to her relief her father was at home, and was induced to go for Dr. Whistler after some delay.

Nao tossed and writhed all night, Piokee watching near him by the dim light of a tallow candle on a beam above his bed. Fauqua dozed at times, but roused herself quite frequently to bring cool water from the spring, for Nao was consumed with thirst.

At dawn came Dr. Whistler, with a span of horses and a light spring wagon. He had brought some blankets and a cot, and other things for Nao's comfort. Cold Blast sat beside the Doctor, his pony trotting in the rear.

If Dr. Whistler's righteous indignation at the young Messiah reader's grave offense was not dispelled by his misfortune, it was held in good control, for there was nothing in his manner but the tenderest concern for Nao's suffering condition.

"Now, my boy, we'll see about the arm," observed he, when the dust of the Messiah campaign was washed away, the wild Indian garb reduced to ashes in the fireplace, and Nao, shorn of his superflous locks, was lying on the cot in a flannel dressing-gown of Dr. Whistler's, from which one sleeve had been cut off. "Will you take something to benumb the pain while I am hunting for the bullet?"

"No; I'd rather keep my senses. Go ahead! I'll grin and bear it," Nao said.

He had revived amazingly, so soon, under the Doctor's care, and he set his teeth with resolute endurance as the glittering probe began its work.

The wound was just below the shoulder, and the bullet was embedded in the flesh against the bone.

"It must be taken out. I'll be as easy as I can, dear boy," said Dr. Whistler, wiping off the beads of sweat from Nao's forehead, for the wound was much inflamed, and there was agony in the operation. "You would better take the ether now. If you should flinch it might be bad for you."

"No, no," resisted Nao. "Dig away, old fellow. I don't feel so much like fighting, as it's you that's killing me. The goody-goody girl might grip my wrist if you're afraid I'll flinch."

"Can you?" Dr. Whistler asked Piokee, who was standing by.

"Yes," she answered, bracing up her nerves.

She held the wrist with steady hands until the torturing work was done. Nao felt a deal of strength imparted by her cool, soft fingers, helping him to bear the pain with fortitude.

There was no school that day, Piokee having told the girls the afternoon before that there would be an intermission until further notice.

In the balmy moonlit evening the wagon Dr. Whistler had brought was made an ambulance to carry Nao to his house. He went to avoid inspection from the train of curious sympathizers from the village who had learned of his misfortune, and had straggled back and forth since morning.

It was an anxious question if there would not have to be another operation, which would cause the luckless Naopope to wear an empty sleeve through life. But eventually Piokee learned from Dr. Whistler that the wound was past all danger, though the arm was very weak.

"I fear the boy will always have a crippled left arm to remind him of his little ghost-dance lark," said he.

"But perhaps he'll do far better with but one strong arm and his experience, than he would have done with both arms, if he'd never had it."

"Very likely," Dr. Whistler replied. "He seems to be completely cured of his wild Indian fever, though it may break out again. From his frank confession Nao didn't have a good time from the start in his exploits. The Cheyennes and Arapahoes were not successful in their efforts to arouse the ghost-dance fervor in the other tribes, and finding that the Government authorities were watching them, they thought it wise to make back tracks for home.

"The boy was left to skirmish for himself. He begged his way a while, and nearly starved on squaw-food, but he grew ashamed of being such a vagabond, and went to work herding cattle on the grazing lands. The cowboys didn't like the way he dressed, I fancy, or objected to the color of his skin.

They ordered him to quit the business, and he was obeying orders when the rustlers overtook him."

"He has had a fearful time, poor fellow," said Piokee. "Does he talk of going back to school, or will he settle down to doing something on the reservation?"

"He thinks he's had enough of school, and so do I. I'll see what he can do managing the sawmill through the summer, and next fall I hope he'll feel inclined to set about improving the allotment which I have secured for him adjoining my farm."

"Oh! then you mean to trust him, after all? I knew you would, if you did look so stern when you declared you never could," Piokee said triumphantly.

"Yes," said Dr. Whistler, with a helpless smile; "I find I'm weak enough to let the young scamp wind me round his finger just as ever. But to change the subject, has your father lately traded for those three fine ponies in that clump of oaks, and those two saddles, bridles, stirrups, whips and other trappings hanging to the trees in such profusion?"

They were standing in the doorway of the tent; the clump of oak-trees was a few yards off.

"Why, I haven't found out," said Piokee. "Keoqualk, old Pawshepaho's nephew, brought them here this afternoon, and there seems to be some mystery

I don't understand. He tied the ponies to the trees and hung the things up there while father watched him. After that they talked awhile, then father went to the corral and Keoqualk came and stood close by the hut as if he had a notion to come in, but hadn't quite decided. I was sure he wanted something and was going out to see, but mother pulled me back and shut the door. I couldn't get her to explain why, and she acted so excited and distressed, I have been wondering ever since what it could mean."

"What next did Keoqualk do?" asked Dr. Whistler in a sternly anxious tone.

"He stood there quite a while stock still — I saw him through the window — then he walked around the house and swung his arms and struck himself as if in deep despair. Then father rode up on his pony, and they went away together."

"Has the fellow been around before, conducting in this singular manner?" Dr. Whistler pursued, with kindling ire.

"Why, yes; he's been here very often since the Mokohokos' raid, and now I think of it, I wonder if he isn't crazy. He has stalked around the tent and hut, looking so disconsolate I really pitied him, and yesterday, while I was in here mixing gems for supper, what did Keoqualk do but sit down on the ground before the open door and cross his arms and

hang his head, and I could hear him sighing at a fearful rate."

A low ejaculation shot from under Dr. Whistler's breath. Piokee started at the strange commotion into which the Keoqualk episode had plunged him, for some reason quite beyond her ken.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TRUE HEART.

DR. WHISTLER was now the Black Hawk Indian, and the Black Hawk Indian was in a towering rage.

He paced the floor with wrathful strides, with stern, set lips and fiercely frowning brow. Ever and anon he paused with startling abruptness, checking his impetuous steps as if to hold a threatening parley with some strong, invisible adversary.

All at once he whirled about and faced the wondering Piokee, who had followed him half-way across the tent, saying in a voice made strangely harsh by his emotion :

"Shall I tell you what it means — this queer behavior of the young man who has brought the ponies to your door, and lurks around to cast a stealthy glance at you and smite his breast in so disconsolate a way ? He wants to buy you as his wife, and your father is considering the bargain. As this Keoqualk

cannot pay the price your father asks for you in ponies, he would make it up in saddles, bridles and whatever trappings he has scraped together by fair means or foul. Yes; I know that I am telling you all this with cruel roughness, but there is no way to break it easily," as she recoiled in wide-eyed horror. "You must face the problem to the bitter end, Piokee," he went on, "and feel the woe of knowing that your father is an ignorant barbarian who would not be ashamed to sell his child for horse flesh. The atrocious custom has begun to die out in our tribe, thank Heaven, but there is still enough of it to overwhelm us with disgrace."

He took another furious turn across the floor, coming back to find Piokee standing straight and still, the queenly little head disdainfully erect, hands held behind her in a rigid clasp, the dark eyes charged with swiftly kindled fire.

"Does my father think to sell me as his wives were sold to him?" she said, with ominous softness of the voice. "Why, it would be so easy to prevent that. It is all according to the will, you see. There isn't anything quite equal to a person's will when it is firmly set. Floods and fires and cyclones aren't so strong as those two little words 'I will.' Do you remember how the martyrs stood all kinds of torture and serenely smiled at death because they had the will to do it? I shall say to Keoqualk and

my father, 'I will refuse,' and that is all there is about it."

The disdainful little head was held in air a moment more, and then rushed over her the shame, the horror of the situation, the despair of hopeless strife against the strength of her degraded parentage that hemmed her in and dragged her down, and she rebelliously cried out:

"Oh! why did God create the Indian? It is all too terrible and I can never, never bear it!"

Sinking down into a chair, this stricken child of the degraded race, she swept herself about and laid her tightly folded arms across its back and dropped her burning face against them.

Dr. Whistler's fiery indignation, which made him rashly meditate, while the Black Hawk Indian held him in his grasp, of riding forth to wreak fell vengeance on the lovelorn Keoqualk, now subsided into agitation of a wholly different sort. His steps were less impetuous, the black scowl vanished and his face grew tender with a new emotion.

Presently he stopped behind Piokee's chair, stretching out his hand as if to touch her hair in light caress. But no; he would not lay his finger-tips upon the bowed young head, so helplessly appealing in its stricken attitude, till he had told her what was in his heart.

"Piokee, there is something that I wish to say,



"PIOKEE, THERE IS SOMETHING I WISH TO SAY."

but I must say it to your face. Will you look up and listen?" he requested gently.

She raised her head with tearless, piteous eyes.

"You look so little sitting there — I tower above you so in height it robs me of my fortitude," he noted with a half-resolute smile. "Perhaps if you would stand and make yourself as tall as possible I might go on with stouter heart. Ah! that is better — now you almost reach my shoulder," as she rose and stood before him with pathetic face and mute, despairing lips. "Piokee, you are but a little girl of sixteen," he resumed, "and I am thirty-one. You are too young, by far, to have to think of what I am about to ask you, and had fate so willed it that you could have passed a safe and happy girlhood in your civilized home, I should not have spoken for some years, at least, and then I fear my courage would have failed me for all time, owing to the difference in our age.

"But everything is changed; your tribe has claimed you as a sacrifice, and you are now confronted by the bitterest and most perilous feature of this wretched Indian life, which gives our young girls, scarcely in their teens, in marriage to the men who may succeed in buying them, and sinks them to a life of drudgery thereafter. O, my poor child! I am frightening you — you shrink and tremble when I try to tell you in the gentlest way that I can deal

with this hard matter. But I am too long in coming to the point.

"Piokee, little one, I want to guard you as my promised wife. If you are pledged to me your father will reject all other suitors, and you will be free from further persecution.

"My one treasure, I must have you! It would be too hard to live my solitary life without you," he besought her eagerly. "Piokee, tell me, had you been in Mamma Prairie's home to-day, and I had asked you if you would sometime be my wife, what would you have answered?"

"Why, I would have answered yes, my chief — a happy yes. What else could I have wished to say?" she murmured, with a rush of wondering joy.

"You might have wished to say no — little women sometimes do," he smiled, "and made me wretched all my days. But now I am the happiest man alive," breaking out into the old, old rhapsody of the successful wooer.

"I shall guard my treasure very jealously," he tenderly declared; "and I dare boast that Keoqualk, the presuming fellow, will be made to cower in his moccasins if he demurs at taking back the ponies."

"But if father should insist on keeping them?" supposed Piokee, trembling anew.

"Then," said Dr. Whistler, with protecting arms about her, "I am sure I should be justified in com-

ing like a cavalier of old, to bear my little lady-love away by might and main to call at once upon the parson."

"But he couldn't help preferring you to Keoqualk, many thousand times," she reassured him, slipping back into the chair to let her fond, proud gaze mount up to him.

"I don't know," gravely doubted he; "Keoqualk with the ponies may be more to him than I should be without them. It is very shocking to consider, after my denunciation of the wretched custom, but I may be forced to buy my wife, just as if I were the veriest barbarian," he added, sitting down upon the stump to face her with the utmost seriousness.

"Why, you couldn't buy me, don't you see?" she reasoned, "since I have already given myself to you because I am so proud and happy to belong to you."

"True, little heart," said he; "but the effect of helping to perpetuate the barbarous custom by outbidding Keoqualk would be quite the same as if I were to purchase an unwilling bride. I am inclined to think a swift ride to the parson's would be less disastrous to my influence as a civilized man," he cogitated with a puzzled air.

"Oh! that would never do except for life or death," protested she, in bright confusion. "Others on the reservation would be following our example, and — and — it's dreadful to elope."

"Well," smiled he, "I'll reason with your father to the best of my ability, and try to win you as the sweet, free gift that you would wish to be; but if I fail in that I can but choose some other way of offering him a — benefit;" he could not say a price — "though I assure you it shall not be that of driving ponies to your door.

"He may accept the offer of my aid to build a house and otherwise improve the land he can select for the allotments of himself and family in one portion. I should wish it to be near my farm, that you may be the better under my protection. To assist the father of my future wife to gain a comfortable home would be a fair act from a civilized view, and I should want to do that even if I had you as the sweet free gift."

"You generous, noble man!" exclaimed Piokee. "But you never ought to do it. If you were as rich as Crœsus you'd be tottering on the verge of ruin in the end from helping others. It would be too beautiful to have you for a neighbor; but what should I do about my school? We could move the tent and furniture to our allotments, but we couldn't move the girls."

"It is quite probable the parents of your girls will settle on allotments of their own before long, and in that case you would lose your class. But you have given them so fine a start I think we could

persuade their parents to allow them to become Miss Harriet's pupils at the Agency, next fall."

"The girls would like that, I am sure, and they could live there at the school and learn much more than I am teaching them. But it would be the trial of my life to give them up, and I should have to raise another class, though I could never find four girls like them in all respects, especially Wak-wak."

"Well, you couldn't step outside the missionary field anywhere within the reservation," Dr. Whistler responded.

"I suppose the tribe are choosing their allotments now," observed Piokee.

"Yes," said he; "the last lone treaty that can ever be presented to our tribe has recently been signed, ceding to the Government the last strip of our salable land. We may now divide the remnant, stretching fifty miles one way and twenty-five the other into quarter sections, and begin our farming failures, as the white man reasonably premises. I shall keep my farm as my allotment. The annuity has been increased from sixty to one hundred dollars by the sale of this last strip of our diminished acres."

"After all, though we do like to scold the Government for having robbed us so, our tribe is now so small we have enough if we knew how to make the best of it," Piokee said. "Why, we are really

rich — much richer than so many white folks lumped together. There will be five farms — eight hundred acres — in our family, and a yearly income of five hundred dollars from the Government. Father ought to save enough to pay you back if you help him build a house. He could sell the hut for something, I suppose. How nicely we might live if father only cared to learn the way. But we will work it out somehow, sometime," she hopefully declared.

"How many years am I to spare you while you try to work it out?" said Dr. Whistler, with a man's impatience to possess the treasure he had scarcely dared to dream of till that hour.

"I don't know, dear," she said, with womanly uncertainty. "All that is in the tangled skein, and we must wait for it to be unwound."

"But, meanwhile, Keoqualk must be vanquished in due haste," observed he, rising to depart. "I shall find your father in the village, I suppose. I shall not rest a minute on his trail till all has been decided.

"No explanation need be made to Keoqualk. By the custom, you have but to leave his offerings where they are till morning. He will be about by earliest dawn to view the prospect, and will know his suit has been rejected when he sees them undisturbed. This, in case my own has been accepted

by your father," added he, with deep anxiety, which he sought to hide beneath a calm exterior.

Cold Blast was still absent when Piokee went to bed. In vigilant suspense she lay awake to watch for his return. She could not hear his steps, he walked so softly in his moccasins, but she heard the clicking of the wooden latch, and smelt his pipe smoke stealing through the cracks into the lean-to.

She arose in trembling haste, and peering through her little window tried to see if he had led the ponies off to the corral, and removed the trappings to the shed. A veil of misty darkness hung between the window and the trees, and strain her eyes as best she might she could discern nothing.

Presently her father's snores proclaimed that he was fast asleep.

A half-formed plan to steal out and reconnoiter was rejected as unsafe, lest Keoqualk be lurking round with like intent.

She settled down in bed, and made a resolute attempt to banish wakefulness by watching in her mind's eye an apparently unending line of sly black pigs creeping through a hedge gap to invade a cabbage patch. Before the thirtieth pig was fairly in the patch Piokee lost herself in sleep.

The earliest morning sunbeams were just streaming through the muslin apron draped across the window for a curtain when Piokee started from her

bed, and in a flash was at the window to inspect the situation at the oaks.

Ponies, saddles, bridles, all were gone.

She dressed herself with speed, and slipping out of doors she flew with winged feet to the corral.

The ponies were not there, nor were the trappings in the shed.

By this she knew her chief had won the suit. But how had it been won? A tumult of misgiving mingled with her joyful relief. Was it only by outbidding Keoqualk, or by her father's own free will?

Cold Blast had bestirred himself much earlier than usual this morning, for the cornpath was distressingly in need of some attention, and to his amazement Fauqua had declined to take the hoe in hand this year. Hence he had risen with a view to setting forth as soon as breakfast was disposed of to secure a plow, by borrowing or hiring, with which to do the work himself. Piokee met him at the bars of the corral as she was coming from the pony shed.

"Father," she began to question, while her heart went pit-a-pat, "were you with Dr. Whistler last night — and did he talk to you — about himself — and me?"

"Heap yes," responded Cold Blast, with a stolid air.

"What — did he say?" she further asked.

"He want Piokee be his little squaw few grass grows. Ugh! queer Injun. Wait long time;" and Cold Blast seemed to meditate in puzzled wonder on the why and wherefore of the waiting.

"Then what did you say?" she pursued, with fluttering anxiety.

"I say he bring four ponies, no traps, I swapee little tame squaw."

"But he wouldn't do it, and you couldn't trade me that way," cried Piokee, while she clutched the bars for a support. "O, father!" she appealed, "you took it all back, didn't you, and told him he might have me free as air, because he is the noblest man that ever lived? You didn't swap me for the least thing, did you, father?"

"Heap yes," he replied, with a decisive grunt.

"Oh! then I'll have to give up trying," said Piokee, feeling that the last prop that had stayed her hopes of working an effectual reformation in her father had been knocked from under, and she could not raise them from the dust again. He was shackled to the barbarous customs, and as long as he should draw the breath of life he could not cast them off.

"He say he not swapee ponies. Swapee true heart," continued Cold Blast, after a depressing silence, during which Piokee leaned against the

bars to view the problem with discouraged eyes. "I smoke long time. Say I swapee Piokee. Take true heart."

There was a joyful little cry, and bounding up Piokee threw her arms around her big, grim father's neck, and dazed him with the first embrace that she had ever dared to give him.

"Father, father! you are so much better than I thought you were. You can't begin to think how happy you have made your civilized daughter."

Fleeing from the blank amazement of her stolid sire she pounced on Fauqua, stirring mush for breakfast on the stove, and seized her round the waist and murmured in her ear:

"Father can be civilized, little mother, and I am so happy, happy, happy! He has given up three ponies and two saddles, and a lot of straps and other trumpery for a strong, true heart, which he knows is better than all else."

Oh! the joy of that delicious morning, with the daisies smiling from the sod, the larks and robins singing in the air, the white clouds sailing overhead.

The reservations after reservations stretching to the Western boundary, no longer seemed as plague-spots on the fair sweet earth.

"True, they are peopled with a race of strange, benighted beings," thought Piokee, "but they can be civilized, they can be civilized!" She sang these

words aloud while milking Buttercup, the gentle cow, the white streams dashing down into the pail and playing an exultant little overture to swell the song.

Was not her friend of friends, the wise physician, one of those who had been civilized? Had he not climbed to noble manhood from the depth of ignorance in which the race was sunk?

And they were climbing everywhere: in schools upon the reservations, and in Eastern cities, on the farms and in the workshop — these young students with the dusky faces and the gloomy natures trammeled by inherited despair.

Ah, yes! the slow, inquiring minds and clumsy, oft-discouraged hands would win the day at last, and then the race would cease complaining, and the white man cease his scoffing, and no longer would there be an Indian problem to perplex the world.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DOUBLE WEDDING.

SUMMER in the lovely other world. The little brown maid Nanno, and the little fair maid Miriam, face to face upon the wide piazza of the ranch-house, in the midst of a bewildering array of playthings, which the little brown maid views in still delight, but scarcely ventures to take hold of, in her wonderment of all such fairy-like belongings.

It was now three weeks since Nanno and Piokee had arrived upon a visit to the ranch-house, and though Miriam had kept up a steady chat at Nanno all this time, she had not gained the merest bit of answer as an inkling to the little shy, still creature's thoughts.

"Don't you ever talk?" said Miriam, heaping Nanno's lap with dolls of every class and color, from the waxen beauty who was queen of all the doll court, to black Sambo, who did duty as a coachman to the queen. "I s'pose your voice is scared at

stwangers, and is hiding somewhere down below your tongue. If a little girl 'at wants to get acquainted oh! des awfully, should tiptoe up to you — vis way, and do — vis way, I fink your voice would have to pop wight out and speak to her." And Miriam swooped down on Nanno with a sudden merry hug that called from her a much astonished and emphatic "oh!"

"I've squeezed it out!" cried Miriam in laughing triumph. "Now don't let it hide again, for I do want to hear it talk and laugh and sing, as if it felt too happy to keep still."

Miriam perched herself upon the arm of Nanno's chair and waited with a listening air for something more to drop from Nanno's lips. As if by some magnetic influence she drew out the words that finally unloosed the little brown maid's tongue.

"You — star — bright — sky — up — night? You — flower? You — pretty — bird?" asked Nanno in a maze of wonder at the little fair-haired vision hovering over her.

"O, no! I'm mamma's girl. But somefin ails your poor dear little voice. It doesn't talk like other children's voices," Miriam said, for Nanno's words came slowly, and with labored effort.

"She's a little Fox, an' 'tain't no wonder that she jumps rope backward with her tongue," said Sally, thrusting one arm through the honeysuckle vines

and shoving in a plate of ginger snaps to where the children sat.

"Fank you, Sally. We are fond of ginger snaps," said Miriam, as she took the plate. "But little girls aren't foxes," she observed, "and foxes don't jump wope, 'specially wiv vere tongues. You shouldn't talk about our company 'at way, Sally dear," with gentle gravity.

"Meant a Fox Injun, not a furry critter. 'Tain't ter be expected that she'll speak up peart an' spry — no, 'tain't — like them that's wagged their tongue at white talk all their lives." So saying, Sally gave her heels full liberty to outrun Ebenezer who was hurrying toward her with a pail of berries on his arm. He pursued her round the house with long, quick strides, and stopped her at the kitchen door.

"Mis' Bowers was tellin' Mr. Bowers out yander by the blackb'ry patch, that that there letter I fetched home this afternoon ter Dewdrop hed bad news. It was from Dr. Whistler. He's a comin' up here in a hurry, an' you'll be dumb-struck ter know they're goin' ter git married — him an' her, right off."

"Git married! Him an' her! Well, that's a thunderbolt that strikes straight down the chimbley," Sally said, with eyes agog. "But 'tain't bad news — no, 'tain't. Leastwise I shouldn't reckon so if I was goin' ter be a han'some young bride, with a

bridegroom as commandin' as a spruce-tree, with a pair of eagle eyes."

"Dewdrop's father's been snatched off with a malarial fever. That's the bad news — or at least we oughter think so; though he warn't no ornament ter Dewdrop as a parient. She can't be livin' down there in the Injun country — her an' them two children an' their mother, with no man about fer a pertector, Dr. Whistler writes; so he's a-goin' ter marry her an' move the mother an' two children to a cabin on his place clost by the house where him an' Dewdrop are a-goin' ter live, as happy as you please. I've always reckoned 'twould be so sometime. That match was made in Heaven, fer the special benefit of them two lonesome souls that's puttin' in their best licks scratchin' up top furrows in the mission sile. I only wisht I was as lucky as the Doctor. Sally, look a-here," he added, "you can be a han'some young bride any time you say the word, though I can't be a bridegroom as commandin' as a spruce-tree, with a pair of eagle eyes. I'm nothin' but a lanky, but I'm more than willin', if you will take up with me fer better or fer wuss."

"Land o' massy, hush! You'll throw me inter fits," protested Sally, with a gasp of scared delight. "I've been a-dodgin' you fer fourteen year or more, an' now you've spoke up plump an' darin', right outdoor in broad daylight."

"Daylight or darkness — one's as good as t'other fer my purpose," Ebenezer said, with a determined air. "I ain't a-goin' ter be kep' upon the tenterhooks no longer. It's high time that I was balancin' the scales ter weigh my fate."

"Yes, 'tis — no, 'tain't — good land! I do' know what ter say. I'm staggered by the sudden shock, but ef you're bound ter be in sech a rush — good gracious! I kin smell my ginger snaps a-burnin' in the oven!" And away flew Sally, leaving Ebenezer's fate still trembling in the balance.

In the little white room sat Piokee, struggling to realize that what she had so nearly wished for months before had come to pass, and she was fatherless.

"I didn't really wish it — O, no, no! I only almost wished it for a single instant," she remorsefully assured herself, while tears of genuine bereavement thickly fell on Dr. Whistler's letter.

"Brave little heart, your mission has not been in vain," the letter said. "Your father, who had sent for me and urged me not to leave him as the end drew near, expressed an interest in 'Piokee's white Messiah,' and listened closely to the story of the Cross which I explained to him as clearly as I could, reading simple passages from Fauqua's Bible. He left his blessing to his civilized daughter who had won his gratitude by casting in her lot with his that she might seek to lead him to a higher life.

"I think that we can now begin to call Up Adoniram Judson. The little fellow showed his filial affection and undaunted bravery by swimming several streams that had been raised beyond their banks by heavy showers, coming in a fearful thunder storm at night to fetch me to his father, of whose illness I was not aware."

And so the tangled skein, as it related to Piokee's lot, had been unwound, and she was thenceforth to be taken care of by her wise, strong friend and generous co-worker in the mission field.

The five allotments had been chosen early in the spring on land adjoining Dr. Whistler's. There was a roomy cabin he had built for tenants, which would make a comfortable home for Fauqua and the children, until Adoniram Judson could be raised and trained to farm a portion of the family acres.

"I have nothing more to fear for you, my dear child, and I gladly send you back to work among your people in the care of that good man," said Mamma Prairie as she helped Piokee to put on a simple white gown she had worn the year before, which they had lengthened for a bridal dress.

"It seems so dream-like, yet so real," rejoined Piokee, while she softly clasped her arms about her foster-mother's neck. "How glad I am that I did not refuse to go with father, though it almost broke my heart to leave this lovely home. O, dear, dear

Mamma Prairie! did you know what you were doing when you made the life of one poor little girl so happy all those years?"

"And it will still be happy, dear, in the devotion of a noble man, and from the good accomplished by self-sacrifice," said Mamma Prairie, lovingly returning the caress.

Priscilla filled the parlors with a wealth of roses, and there was a wedding bell of prairie flowers, collected by Bub Merrill, and arranged in tasteful shape by Floy. The happy Doctor and his beautiful young bride-elect were stationed underneath the wedding bell, and Mr. Winslow, with a simple ceremony, made them man and wife.

"You dearest dear, it's too romantic to believe, that you are Mrs. Dr. Whistler," said Floy, as she embraced the bride at the conclusion of the ceremony. "It is such a pity Ellery has gone back East. It would delight his soul to be here to congratulate Bright Alfarata and her chief."

Throughout the preparations for Piokee's marriage Sally had been laboring under a suppressed excitement, of whose import none save Ebenezer had the slightest glimmer. He sustained himself with resolute composure at the wedding, keeping steady and admiring eyes on Sally, who was in a festal garb of gaily flowered sateen, with an immense bouquet of full-blown crimson roses on one shoulder.

There were no developments until the minister was taking his departure with his wife and daughters, when, to the surprise of everybody, Ebenezer firmly took the arm of Sally, whom by dint of much maneuvering he had kept within his reach, and marched her out upon the doorstep in the wake of Mr. Winslow.

"Jes' hold on a minute, parson," he requested. "There's another little knot we'd like ter hev you tie this afternoon. Miss Spratt an' me air goin' ter git married like the heft o' people, ef she don't back out afore you git ter tie the knot. You needn't bother ter come back inter the house. We'd jest as soon be married on a doorstep as below a weddin' bell."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Bowers, much delighted that her pair of faithful helpers had at length arrived at a felicitous understanding. "You must come right back into the parlor and be married in good style."

It took some managing to marshal Sally to the proper place beneath the wedding bell, but finally the stand was made and the minister proceeded with the ceremony.

Sally's sole response to the momentous question whether she did take this man for better or for worse was a bewildered gasp which was interpreted in the affirmative.

"You could knock me prostrate with a feather," said Aunt Abigail when all was over. "Not a wedding garment nor a mite of other preparation but ice cream and cake. It doesn't matter quite so much for Dewdrop, as she's going back among the aborigines, but how that crazy Sally'll face the music in this gaping neighborhood without a scrap of wedding finery, is more than I can prophesy."

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